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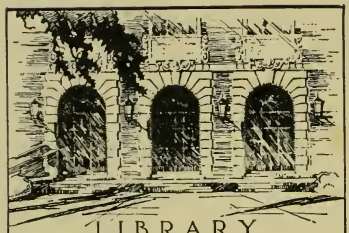

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THE

MAMELUKES:

A ROMANCE OF LIFE IN GRAND CAIRO.

VOL. I.

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THE

MAMELUKES:

A ROMANCE OF LIFE IN GRAND CAIRO.

BY

A. A. PATON,

AUTHOR OF "THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF THE ADRIATIC;" "SERVIA, THE YOUNGEST MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN FAMILY;" AND "THE MODERN SYRIANS."

"What we greedily seek for in poems, travels, romances, is the picture of a state of society unlike the regularity of our own."—GUIZOT.

"The guests assembled from different quarters, and following different professions, formed in language, manners, and sentiments a curious contrast to each other, not indifferent to those who desired to possess a knowledge of mankind in its varieties."—*Rob Roy.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THIS WORK IS DEDICATED

TO

JOHN WINGFIELD LARKING, Esq.

BY HIS SINCERE AND ATTACHED FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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THE MAMELUKES:

A ROMANCE OF LIFE IN GRAND CAIRO.

CHAPTER I.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

On the afternoon of a day, in the month of September, 1797, a string of camels had just traversed the desert that lies between Egypt and Syria. It was easy to see that both men and animals suffered from an autumnal hot wind, which, although much less oppressive than those of May, and unattended with the violence and danger of the simoom, had yet penetrated with languor and fatigue every fibre and muscle of the bipeds and qua-

drupeds of the caravan. The steady elasticity of the long-measured step of the camel, showed itself in a slower and more uneasy gait. The passengers and drivers exchanged not a word; but, *Ya, latif!*—Oh, gentle!—or other ejaculation, was heard from time to time, or a short Arabic couplet, expressive of patience; the drooping eyelids and feeble enunciation of the reciter, confirming the impression, that language was given to man to disguise his real feelings.

The track the camels followed was still the desert; wild isolated palms grew here and there, out of a soil that seemed entirely sterile, but denoted latent water. To the right might be seen the first traces of the basin of the Nile, on which the sun shone with a dull, misty, ill-defining radiance; while the horizon, hazy with the particles of sand or dust floating in the air, showed the cultivable territory, without communicating to the caravan that satisfaction which was their due, in the normal course of nature, on arriving at verdure and vegetation, after traversing the desert.

The youthful Khaled, seated on a camel with saddle-bags of hair-cloth, and a carpet under him, wore a *kefieh*, or silk and cotton small striped shawl, which hung down each temple, while the thick folds of a turban protected his head from the sun, should it shine in its lustre. An over-all of coarse brown cloth, with a single silk and cotton robe below, with pistols in his girdle, and crimson shoes on his feet, completed his equipment.

For hours he had leisurely watched the feet of the camel in front of him, as they alternately contracted like a living sponge at the touch of the *diver*, or set to the ground beautifully expanded, till they became like the tores at the foot of the shaft of a column. He occasionally moistened his clay with a draught of unrefreshing water from a gourd, and at length, approaching the alluvial soil, he attempted, with his languid eye, to penetrate the hazy horizon, and perceived, or thought he perceived, on his right hand, the lakes or ponds of the inundation of the Nile, while ahead of him was an irregular line of palm groves, in the midst of

which was a mound or hill, capped with the town.

"Bilbeis," said the camel-man behind him, pointing to the town.

"El-hamdulillah! — praise be to God!" — said the youth. But although, owing to the haze, the distance at which Bilbeis was discovered, was not great, and it rapidly increased in size, its apparent approximation did not keep pace with the impatience of Khaled.

At length the caravan entered between palm trees, growing out of alluvial soil, partly covered with water, when an instantaneous relief was felt from the vegetation, which, by its humidity, tempered the parched air; and, ascending steep mounds, the caravan entered the town; and, turning to the left, the camels were unloaded for the day, within the wide courtyard of a khan or caravanserai.

"At length within the walls of an Egyptian town," said Khaled to himself, as he slipped off his camel on the ground; and though his head ached, he looked curiously about him, and on his first glance around him, could

scarcely fail to remark the contrast between the places of public entertainment in the Syria he had left, and those in Egypt, in which he now arrived for the first time. Instead of the stone of Lattachia and Tripoli, with somewhat of ornamental sculpture mingling with the solid vaults, he found himself in a quadrangle of sun-dried bricks, without an arcade, and little cells, with mud walls and mud floors, for the use of travellers. In Syria, he left variety and dispersion, many religions, many climates, many local capitals, and many rivers. In Egypt, one river, but, that single river the Nile; one metropolis, but that one the finest in the Moslem world—the guarded city of Cairo.

When a room was secured, Khaled, who had no servant, got a Bedouin to assist him to remove his luggage into it; and as it had no window, the open door served instead; and having a severe headache, his carpet and coverlet were spread out, and, laying his pistols and dirk behind his pillow, was soon asleep. The court of the khan was full of hubbub,

from the unloading of the caravan, and the Bedouins and passengers were too busy with their own affairs to remark a man who sauntered apparently unconcernedly around the enclosure; but had he been closely watched (to provide against which contingency he himself had an eye all around, to see that no one occupied himself with him), it would have been seen that he was attentively examining the condition and appearance of the various arriving parties. He was a little man, apparently fifty years of age, with a complexion of a deep bronze. He wore a turban and a blue cotton robe, his legs were bare, and old yellow shoes, without stockings, covered his feet. He seemed, by instinctive quickness, to know instantaneously when his countenance was observed, when it affected a blank indifference; but when conscious that he was unperceived, his piercing eye showed an alternate inquisitiveness or puzzled pensiveness, that revealed ingenuity on the alert to accomplish a secret purpose.

The various countenances and equipments of the passengers were examined, and at length

Khaled seemed to fix his attention, and, crossing to the other side of the khan, and sitting down at the wall, lighted his pipe, and looking at him under the legs of the camels, seemed to have made up his mind, and waited until he was asleep. He then put into the corner of the room or cell a small sack, which he brought from the side of the gate, and walked into the street towards the bazaar, in the middle of which was a coffee-house, somewhat preserved from the parched suffocating heat, by having poles stretched from house-top to house-top, which were covered over, so as to darken the shops, while the space in front of the coffee-house was from time to time watered, so as to create a slight coolness and humidity. Benches, covered with mats, had been built on each side of the door facing the street, but from the unpleasant state of the weather, they were devoid of visitors; and in the deep dark shade of the interior, sat a dervish, with his high conical felt hat, having on the bench beside him a basket of provisions, from which he ate some cheese, with a round flat cake of bread.

The man with the green turban entered, and sat himself down on the other side of the provision basket, and began to imitate the Dervish, who called for coffee, and making up for himself his own portable hookah, began to converse in a low tone with the wearer of the green turban, so as not to be heard by either the Arnaout, sitting at the door, or by the coffee-house-keeper, who, at the other dark corner, was engaged in the manipulation of his goblets and canisters, where the red glare of live charcoal shone in the darkness on his swarthy visage.

"What news, comrade?" said the Dervish.

"Nothing to boast of," answered the man with the green turban, in as low a tone as that in which he was addressed. "Nothing to boast of! One by one I have examined the appearance of all the travellers by this caravan, and doubt if we shall gain anything to compensate for our trouble in coming hither. There is only one young man, whose equipment does not appear very stylish, but, by a certain melancholy gentility in his countenance, I guess that he is of a good family, and that his capacious saddle-

bags, at all events, contain rich clothes, but of any mercantile effects, I have great doubts. I am sure that we did wrong to come here."

"And I think differently. Are we not known up the river and down the river? Can we go to Beni Souef without being known in a moment, and the same with other places? We have not been here for five years before—the story of the Bagdad Merchant must be forgotten long ago. You were not in that business, and nobody, after so many years, would recognise me under my costume of a dervish. Bilbeis is just as a virgin field for our opening."

"Virgin as the desert behind it, not worth the opening. A single failure here exposes us to more risk than in Cairo, and not worth the trouble."

"Too quick, friend. We know not yet the contents of this man's purse, nor yet of his saddle-bags: a man never crosses the desert from Syria to Egypt without carrying a sufficiency of money. Besides, we have got a strong

hint from Yousef the Bassass (police-runner), that a liberal snack in the business doing will not save us for the future. And has not Ibrahim Bey threatened the Waly with dismissal, if the police of Cairo be not better attended to? But what happens in Bilbeis or elsewhere, does not concern him. So now to business."

"What does his age appear to be?"

"Two-and-twenty, and a soft youth I should say."

"Have you put my bag into his room, and are all the other rooms filled?"

"They seem to be so, otherwise we should have had no excuse for your sharing his, but I advise you to effect an entrance immediately, for he is now sound asleep, and therefore suits our purpose. How do you mean to operate?"

"How can I tell as yet. We will have no violence on any account, always save and except the danger of being taken. There is time before the starting of the caravan for Cairo to concert measures."

"Did you remember to bring the narcotics?"

"All right!" said the man in the green turban.

"Well then," said the other, "do not leave here, or the bazaar, until you hear from me again, and in the evening I will be enabled to say how we are to proceed."

So the Dervish laying down a few parahs on the counter of the coffee-house-keeper, left the place.

CHAPTER II.

THE COFFEE-HOUSE.

It was well on in the afternoon when Khaled awoke, his headache was gone, but he was acutely thirsty. The water-gourd was applied to his lips, but immediately dashed away, so distastefully flat and tepid had it become.

"Gently there, friend," said a deep bass voice from a person unseen by Khaled as he lay with his face turned to the wall, "we are neither so overstocked with spare room or spare water as you suppose."

On this Khaled turned his head briskly, and perceived that he had got a companion, in the costume of a dervish, with a deep copper countenance, who sat cross-legged on a carpet on the other side of the cell, and with his hand-

kerchief was wiping the spilt water from his robe, and was smoking a water-pipe as comfortably as circumstances would allow, for he had rigged out a couple of coarse towels across the door way, which being kept humid, helped to keep out the stifling hot wind.

"Pardon my rudeness," said Khaled, rising, "but I am feverish—this is a land of fire, and I saw not what I did."

"You are thirsty?" said the Dervish, inquiringly.

"Like a valley before the autumnal rains," said Khaled.

On this, the Dervish took from a corner a cool water-bottle of porous potter's earth, which, by gradually exuding, retains a certain coolness, and handing it to Khaled, he took a long pull at it, and thanking the stranger, sat up.

"Has the Asr (hour of afternoon prayer) passed," said Khaled.

"We are now within an hour of sunset," said the Dervish; "but pray excuse my taking half of your room. The khan is crowded, and there was no other place."

" You are my father," said Khaled.

" Your road, companion?" said the Dervish; " but you seem a stranger; are you for Cairo?"

" By the permission of the High God."

" You have come from the other side of the desert—from Acre, I think."

" No—from Aleppo," said the youth, with some hesitation, which was remarked by the Dervish, as a scarcely perceptible wink of the left eye showed.

" Halebi chelebi,—Aleppine superfine."

" And you," said Khaled, " whither are you bound?"

" To the guarded city of Cairo," said the Dervish.

" Then we will make the journey together," said the youth.

" Welcome to the land of Egypt," said the Dervish. " There is nothing like a little travel for a youth of your age. You recollect the proverb, 'Stagnant water stinks; and the aloe, a common tree in its own country, is a fragrant perfume in distant lands.'"

" But there are other proverbs," said Khaled;

" 'A malediction on travel if only for a mile, for the bread of a man is in his own land.' "

" These might be all webs spun by the same weaver," said the Dervish, " only the first may be a remembrance of the groves of Damascus, or a blessing on Egypt and her Nile. And the last was, perhaps, a curse on the desert you have crossed in such a land wind as this."

" It is possible," said the youth, reflecting as he raised the humid curtain in front of the door, and beckoning the khan-keeper, requested him to get some kebabs from the bazaar; for, in spite of languor, the long fast had given him an appetite.

" Not so fast," said the Dervish, taking a basket from the corner. " I have here two roast chickens, stuffed with rice, white bread, and a cake of honey pastry, that would tempt the palate of a sated vizier. So make yourself welcome in the name of the most merciful God, and keep me company."

When the repast was concluded it was sunset; and both of them, after ablution, said prayers. But something told Khaled that

this was a mere form with the Dervish, and he concluded that, like many others of his order, he had little of religion besides the costume; while the Dervish, from various circumstances of the slightest description, felt certain that Khaled was not a true Moslem. Prayers ended, the Dervish proposed an adjournment to the bazaar, to drink a cup of coffee, and hear the news, to which Khaled agreed; and the humid hangings being removed, showed the camels all in one corner, with their legs bound, to prevent their rising, and the Bedouins in the middle of the ground, sitting, at some little distance, apparently regardless of the heat of a fire, on which was boiling a huge pot of meal-porridge, which one of them was stirring, and preparing for supper.

"But we must lock the door," said the Dervish, "for in Egypt we are overrun with thieves, and we could not put so good a face on such an adventure as Hodja Nusreddin Effendi."

"How so?" said Khaled.

"One day he saw thieves coming out of

his house with a part of his property, and slily following them, noted the house to which they were carried, so taking the rest of his things to the thief's house, he entered and threw them down."

"'What means this?' said the thieves.

"'Have I not removed my quarters hither?' said Hodja. 'You carried the first things, and I carried the last.'

"So the thieves, ashamed of themselves, gave him all his property. But those thieves were not Egyptian;" and, added the Dervish, "if you would find well—be sure you lock well."

"I have heard much of the Cairo thieves," said Khaled, "and am desirous to find a khan to alight at, in the first instance, which is quite sure; can you recommend me such a one?"

"Undoubtedly, at the Kitchen of Black Honey, in the Mergoosh. Here you will be quite safe, for Cairo is a perfect ant-hill of impostors."

They now arrived at the coffee-house, at which was seated a more numerous company than in

the morning, while a public reciter, advanced in years, who had served the bathers all day in the bath, was, with a theatrical intonation, recounting the adventures of Rokn Eddin Daher Bibars, that bold Turk, who, after the fall of the Kurdish dynasty of Saladin, was the terror of both Franks, Crusaders, and those Tartar hordes of Central Asia, that preceded the great invasion of Timour; and who many a time and oft made the very town of Bilbeis the first stage of his journey to Syria.

The reciter was in the most interesting part of his tale, when a man entered the group, and sitting down, said "The Nile is rising; the marks at the Nilometer show a rise of two *draas* in four hours, and we previously had a full Nile."

No sooner was this said, than the buzz of conversation became general, and the reciter, seeing himself neglected, immediately stopped.

"What damage done?" said several voices.

"No one knows. A mountain of corn must have been carried away from somewhere up the river; and a boatman told Abou Hilwa, that

the grain was floating down past Djezireh, like pomegranate soup, and the large mountain of grain at Boulak, belonging to Sheikh Cassim, is sure to be swept away, if the water rises a few inches more."

"There is no power but in the high and great God," said several voices.

"Thank God," said the Naib, or Cadi's clerk, an old man, whose left hand was withered and shrunk up; "a high inundation is not so bad as a low one. I should not relish to eat kebabs made of another man's flesh."

"And when was that?" said a young man.

"That was in the year 457 of the Flight; when the rains failed in Abyssinia, and the loaves of bread were sold by auction, and an egg cost a dinar, and when all the dogs and cats were eaten. Cutlets of human flesh were publicly sold, and passengers in the narrow streets were drawn up by hooks into the windows of houses, and slaughtered and eaten."

"For heaven's sake, frighten us no more," said another man, "with your catalogue of hor-

rors. God has been more merciful with our generation. But there is no escape from what is written and predestined. And such a moment as that is the only one in which one might envy the possession of gold and jewels, which are a useless ornament to the person."

"And what can gold and jewels do?" said the old man, "when people have not bread to eat. In that year, a woman went out with some jewels, crying aloud in the streets, 'Whoever gives me bread, will get these jewels;' and no one offering, she looked at them, and said, 'You wretched baubles, of what use are you to me, if you cannot assist me in the hour of dire necessity?' on which she cast them away, and returned sorrowing to her home."

This conversation, from the novelty of the circumstances, arrested the attention of Khaled, and he did not observe that the Dervish slipped the key of the room into the hand of the man with the green turban, who sat beside him, who took it to the khan, and lighting a little wax taper, at a miscellaneous grocer's shop, he put it into a small paper lantern.

The Bedouins had now disappeared, having gone to encamp outside the wall of the town, but another set of travellers were arriving, so, opening the door of the room of Khaled and the Dervish, he shut it again, and bolted it inside, and laying the lantern on the ground, behind the water-bottle, so as not to attract attention from without, through the chinks of the door, carefully noted the position of the saddle-bags of Khaled, — then lifted them into a corner, — as they were not padlocked in the European way, he began to unlace the thongs, with the rapidity and expertness of one acquainted with his profession. He was somewhat disappointed at finding that they contained nothing but clothes, and necessaries of travel; so, laying them up again, with the same expertness, and replacing the thongs, he blew out the taper, which he contracted and put in his breast, and, opening the door, locked it again, and rejoined the Dervish at the coffee-house where the indefatigable reciter had again begun to recall the audience from the inundation of the Nile, to the adventures of Bibars. But

he had a sort of rival in the old man, who continued to dilate on the horrors of the great famine of the Fatimite period.

"But do you not think," said Khaled, "that there have been some exaggerations in these statements?"

"None at all," said the old man, who was the naib or clerk of the Cadi of Bilbeis, and felt, that, as a man of letters and erudition, his reading was not to be impugned. "Nothing could be more circumstantial," said he, "than the chronicles of the period, and a woman attested by oath her escape from being butchered."

During these wonderful stories, but not more wonderful than true, the Dervish was conversing, in a low tone, with the man with the green turban, who had laid the key down beside him, while a man in rags, with a goat-skin of water slung on his neck, was squirting the liquid about, so as to produce a little coolness, for the land wind was still oppressive.

"Come, come, cousin," said the Dervish to Khaled, "we start betimes to avoid the heat of to-morrow, and must get back to our khan,

or else we shall be half roasted long before we reach Cairo."

"You are the prince of the knowing," said Khaled. "Let us go."

So they went back to the khan and arranged their mattresses and coverlets as well as possible, the Dervish taking particular notice of Khaled as he took off his upper clothes. He observed that a black leathern purse was taken out of a pocket of his sadereey, or breast robe, and put under one of his saddle-bags, which served as a pillow. So waiting until he heard him snore, the Dervish felt for the purse, but after an hour's attempt, perceived that there were no means of removing it. So said he to himself, "Now for an hour or two's sleep, and then, hey! for to-morrow's ingenuity."

Thus thinking to himself, the Dervish lay down to take a little sleep.

The caravan for Cairo started an hour after midnight: the hot wind still painfully oppressive, but just before daylight a sudden coolness took place, and a slight breeze was felt from the opposite direction, which produced an in-

stantaneous refreshing effect on the nervous system of the young Syrian.

"Shimaly! a north wind," said the Dervish, who was an Egyptian.

"Gharby! a west wind," said Khaled, who was a Syrian.

The sea from which the cool wind comes, lying northwards from Egypt, but westwards from Syria. This welcome incident, with the dawn soon afterwards peeping up from behind the low hills to the left, had an instantaneous effect on the spirits and good humour of the whole party. The Bedouin camel-master began to sing in his strange uncouth way. The Dervish, who had a strong husky voice, and was not musical, grew loquacious; but eager expectation of entering the Egyptian metropolis absorbed Khaled, and the golden orb of day, no longer dim and undefined, emerging from the crest of hills, shot across the gardens down to the right, and traversing the Nile, bathed the peaks of the pyramids with the ruddy tints of dawn.

When within a little more than an hour of

Cairo, the landscape partaking of that mixed character which is peculiar to that debatable land, in which the influences of the Nile and its vegetation dispute possession with the desert: they approached the khan of the Emir Yezbek, since dilapidated, which was often the rendezvous of travellers arriving from both Suez and Bilbeis; westwards, as they drew near, it was seen to adjoin a field fenced with Indian fig, and containing a few palms, whose stunted growth denoted the poverty of the soil, and the insufficiency of the water, except during the period of the inundation. On the other side of the khan, was the arid plain, which appeared to be the scene of the exercise of a large party of horsemen, and, from time to time, cavaliers seemed as if engaged in a sham fight, their steeds prancing and galloping, their arms gleaming in the sunshine, and an occasional pistol or carbine shot heard amid the confused trampling of hoofs and neighing of the wild stallions, while at a few yards from the khan was a large and showy tent, surmounted by a gilt apex, in which sat two men richly dressed,

reclining on cushions, and smoking long pipes, and attended by a large retinue of servants, who waited all around the tent.

The caravan, to steer as clear of the troops as possible, kept close to the fence of Indian fig, and appeared disposed to pass on to Cairo, but the passengers wished to halt for a cup of coffee, and the camels appeared to be very much of the same opinion, for a khan is a khan to a camel and a mule, as well as to the biped traveller; and although the language of animals is still a mystery, there is no mistaking the yes or no of a camel. The caravan therefore made a halt, and to avoid the confusion, the Dervish took Khaled into one of the cells, no longer used, and in which a part of the wall was already dilapidated; the greater part of the khan in question having been since used up as materials for a large white villa now seen nearer the Nile.

"We will remain here half an hour," said the Dervish, "which will give you time to see how our Egyptian Mamelukes go through their exercise; but first let us drink a cup of coffee."

"No," said Khaled, "I will go and tell the man to bring it."

"It is useless," said the Dervish; "what with the caravan that we met at the door, besides our own, and all these Mameluke servants, the khan is in such a bustle, that we must make it ourselves. Go in the mean time and take a glance at the exercises."

Khaled then looked through the opening in the wall; he examined with interest and curiosity the scene before him. The horsemen were mostly young men in the vigour of youth, who wore a silk and cotton robe, braced by a girdle; two upper robes of cloth, and trousers of enormous volume, and on their heads, instead of the crimson fez of modern times, was a high yellow padded *kaouk*, around which were twisted the ample folds of a white muslin turban. Their horses were rather remarkable for their compact massive barrel, strong short curled neck, and fine head, than for that slender grace and tenuity of limb, which is characteristic of the thorough-bred English race-horse; and the massive saddle, with its high pommel and

cantel, along with the heavy habiliments and arms of the Mamelukes, almost seemed too great a burden to be borne conveniently, and fitted rather for sudden and violent exertion than for long marches. Armed with straight spears of palm branches of about four feet long, with the leaves stripped off, they formed a large circle, and in parties of two exercised themselves, jousting with these weapons, advancing and throwing them with the utmost precision of which they were capable, and instantly wheeling and retreating; and occasionally, when the horse was in full career, pulling him up, so as to stop in a moment, through the power of a bit, which embraced the lower jaw by a curb, composed of a solid ring, which gave a slender youth the power of stopping the most vigorous barb in a moment, for the purpose of taking aim, which was sometimes disturbed by the momentum of the animal, making him slide on his legs like a wooden horse, even after he had obeyed the signal to stop.

While these exercises were proceeded with the Dervish re-entered the dilapidated room,

or cell, with two coffee-cups, and a little pan of the foaming liquid; and at the door poured out a cup, taking care that Khaled did not perceive some dark coloured infusion already in the cup. He then filled out into the other cup unmingled coffee, which he himself drank, and returning after a short absence, while Khaled continued to look at the exercises, they sat down on the carpet of the Dervish, which he had brought, and then they began to smoke and to talk, as the horsemen were seen through the aperture to career backwards and forwards.

"I feel somewhat heavy," said Khaled, "and would fain sleep half an hour if the caravan waited as long."

"Do not sleep," said the Dervish, "but let us have another cup of coffee, and that will revive us. It is that monotonous motion of the camel, and our early start so soon after midnight, which makes one drowsy, and my own eye-lids are so heavy, that there is nothing for it but another cup of coffee."

"It is my turn to go," said Khaled, "why should you have all the trouble."

"Because you are a stranger, and we are now within an hour of Cairo, where I am a son of the town;" and off he darted again, and in a few minutes returned with another cup of coffee; and the same process was gone through of giving Khaled a cup in which a dark coloured ingredient already existed, while the Dervish poured out for himself a cup of the unmixed beverage.

When the Dervish went to the kitchen of the khan, the Bedouin was there, who told him that they should start immediately; to which the Dervish replied, that the young man and himself wished to remain, and see the exercises, and, besides, he was engaged to dine with him at mid-day at the convent of the Dervishes at the Goolshany, and that the young man intended to put up at the Kitchen of Black Honey in the Mergoosh; and that after having deposited the young man's baggage there, if the camel-man chose to be at the convent of the Rose Garden that he would find a good dinner, to which he, the camel-man, would be heartily welcome. The Bedouin was quite

content with this arrangement, and made ready to start, while the Dervish went into the room in which Khaled was, and told him that the Bedouin said he need not hurry, and that if he wished to take a half hour's sleep he might do so.

Khaled was already in a recumbent posture. Morpheus had already made some advances with his fascinations, and nothing loath to avail himself of the opportunity afforded by the delay, the young man was in a few minutes in a state of profound unconscious slumber. The Bedouin now came out to hear from Khaled himself, the confirmation of what he had first heard from the Dervish, but this prudent personage was on the out-look for him at the door of the cell; and the Dervish, with an air of indifference, told the camel-driver that he was weary from the exhaustion of the desert, in the hot wind, and had begged not to be disturbed, and that he and the young man would enter Cairo by ride and tie, on the mule of the Dervish. The Bedouin bethought himself a moment, and as he had heard the young man himself say,

that he intended to put up at the Kitchen of Black Honey, where his baggage being consigned to the khan-keeper, would be perfectly safe, and, as the dinner with the dervishes promised to be a convenient concomitant of the arrangements, the Bedouin, suspecting nothing, forthwith started with his caravan for Cairo.

During this time the man with the green turban had been prowling about the khan, and, on receiving a signal from the Dervish, entered the dilapidated apartment.

"What news?" said he.

"That we have no time to lose," said the Dervish, in a whisper, pointing to Khaled, who lay in the corner, breathing heavily in his sleep. "Keep a sharp eye to the door that no one approaches without notice, and I will cast an eye to the opening in the wall while the business is done. After that make your way as fast as you can to the Kitchen of Black Honey in the Mergoosh, and a quarter of an hour after you have seen the Bedouin depart for the convent of the Rose Garden, present yourself as Khaled Ebn Zobar, and get the luggage. If any

doubt should exist about your being the person, get into a passion, pull the seal-ring off your finger, and make an impression of the name. Do not bring the luggage through the bazaars, for you would risk meeting the Bedouin or some of the Bassasseen (police runners), but take them round by the streets at the back of the house of Abou Ali, where I will come; and whence, after night-fall, we will take the things, to Hosh Bardak."

So saying the Dervish looked out attentively through the wall, and perceived that the Mamelukes were all too busy with their exercises to feel any curiosity to look into the khan. Nasif Bey was standing up in front of the tent, and showing his friend the excellence of a sword that he held, which, by an experiment on a mock-turban of cotton steeped in water, he cut through at a single stroke. So seeing the coast clear, the Dervish transferred to his own pocket the purse in the breast-pocket of Khaled, and taking with him his pistols, left the poor youth, with his clothes, and some small silver coins in his other pocket; and both immediately

started for Cairo, taking different roads. The man in the green turban mounted on the stout mule of the Dervish, which took its way across the sands to the Gate of Victory; while the Dervish, after a short distance, turned off to the right, through the gardens, intending to enter Cairo by the Gate of the Nile, muttering a curse, as he parted, on that detestable custom-house-keeper, at the Gate of Victory, whose villany consisted in his knowing the pretended Dervish, under every disguise, to be the greatest thief and swindler within the four walls of Cairo.

CHAPTER III.

THE CADI.

The noise and confusion of the caravan breaking up roused Khaled, who started up with a half-headache, and, looking through the hole in the wall, was surprised to see what he supposed to be his own caravan, on the move without him. He went hastily out, and, laying down a piece of money on the khan-keeper's table, said that he had out-slept himself, and asked hurriedly why he had not been awaked, and how the Dervish and camel-man had gone on before him.

"What do I know!" said the khan-keeper, gruffly, shrugging his shoulders. "I have something else to do than to look after travellers, who are old enough to look after

themselves. I heard the Dervish say something to the Bedouin about a good dinner—and the convent of the Rose Garden; and, if you are to be of the party, you ought to have been on your legs before this time. The khan is old, large, and tumbling to ruins, and I have something else to do than to be running through the vaults after drowsy travellers."

Khaled no sooner heard this than starting off with the old carpet of the Dervish about his shoulders, he came breathless up to the caravan, but saw camels, and human faces, with which he was unfamiliar, and, asking how far he was from Cairo, was told that if he walked smartly, he might arrive at the Gate of Victory in less than an hour. The forenoon sun was now high in the heavens, instead of the mist of the day before. All was perspicuity. Lofty and beautiful edifices were seen at some distance, at the foot of the hills,—but this was the city of the dead and not of the living. Those fretted cupolas and tottering minarets covered the remains of those Mameluke Sultans of Egypt, whose systems of go-

vernment was founded by the genius and valour of Saladin, and which was strong enough to resist all the efforts of crusading Europe, to possess the Holy Land; at length, under a monarch who loved science and literature better than war, it succumbed to the superior energy of the Ottoman Sultan, and the more vigorous organisation of the Ottoman Empire, under Selim, the great father of the great Soliman.

A series of low mounds or hillocks marked the city itself, and almost before being aware of it, Khaled arrived at the Gate of Victory,—with its masses of masonry rivalling a Roman construction, and yet in its details at once elaborate and graceful,—and hastily passing through it, he at length found himself in the guarded city of Cairo.

The first aspect of the streets of Cairo is so different from what we have in Europe, that the reader will pardon me if I describe what is familiar to every native of the city, and would be superfluous, if I were writing solely for the Egyptian public. The lower part of the houses was built of stone, and the upper of sun-dried

bricks; while little carved wooden lattices supplied the place of windows. The doors had large wooden locks, inscribed "Hoo el Halak-wu-el Baky"—He (God) is the Creator and the Remaining. Although this was once the Court end of the town, it has now little of the bustle and wealth that it had at the time of the Fatimite Caliphs; but the large poor population, and the numerous provision-shops, and khans, for the sale of rural produce, give an animation of a humble, but not uninteresting character to this part of the town. The decadent Place Royale, of the days of Henri Quatre, and the *halles* near the Rue de la Verrerie, and the Rue des Lombards, flash upon the European traveller, who rambles through this part of the town, as a sort of distant resemblance. The palaces of the Fatimites have disappeared as completely as the Palais des Tournelles, but many a house by the relics of its ornaments—many a Cairo Hotel de Senlis, still exists to tell an obscure mysterious tale of better days. A strong odour of garlic is wafted from an arch-way, and, without being informed through the ears, the

olfactory nerves at once announce, that this is the famed Wekalet-el Töm, or garlic market, and a fragrant odour from another large khan close by, is that of the lemon and orange store.

As Khaled advanced farther down the line of bazaars, a motley throng kept his attention on the stretch, for he had now got into what might be called the High-street of the metropolis. Here is the greatest thoroughfare — here are the best furnished shops — here are many of the noblest architectural monuments— here is seen the Oriental and Arab type of Cairo—here is the greatest artery of metropolitan life ; it is the quarter exclusively neither of the poor, nor of the rich, nor of the townsmen—nor of the stranger, but the quintessence of all.

"*Dahrak*, mind your back!" here came a loaded donkey behind Khaled, and pinned him as effectually to the wall in the crowded passage as the "gare" of the French coachman, in the days of Mercier's inimitable picture of Paris. The pipe-cleaner, with his implements, went about soliciting employment. The sherbet-

man, with tinkling cup, appealed to the thirsty passenger — the Moslem townsman, decently dressed in white or yellow turban, long cloth robe, slow, stately, and sleepy, caring little for wealth or power, provided he was kept well dressed, with little to do, and as little in the sun as possible. There, too, might be seen the Coptic clerk, with black turban and inkstand in his girdle, and fakeer, or pauper, with a single blue shirt, and cotton cap, without a turban; and then, what a hubbub ahead, while the crowded retinue of a Mameluke Bey cleared the way for the great man, mounted on a foaming barb, in all the splendour of old Turkish dress and caparison.

They were now in the crowded Bazar-el-Moyed; on their right rose the tall walls of the mosque of that name, and in front was the Bab Zueileh — the Temple-Bar of Cairo's Strand and Fleet-street. An enormous gateway, flanked by two sturdy towers, such as the luxuriant imagination of a scene-painter would give to the castle of a giant in an eastern pantomime, while above the iron-ribbed

and iron-bolted gate, twin minarets, fine by degrees and beautifully less, shoot up into the blue sky.

Khaled had asked his way to the well-known point, and again inquiring for the convent of the Rose Garden, a portal was pointed out to him a few yards off, with high steps, leading into a court-yard, and standing at the door, a dervish, twirling his amber beads, and laughing very loudly, with a muscular ragged Circassian pilgrim from Mecca, whose upper tunic was frogged with little flutes for cartridges, like the galoons of a drummer's jacket. He asked him if Youssouf was here.

"What Youssouff?" said the Dervish.

"Youssouff, the Dervish of the Goolshany, or Rose Garden," said Khaled.

"Here is some mistake," said they. "We have had no Youssouff in this convent of the Goolshany these four years come next festival of the Neseem, when our Youssouff died!"

"Strange and singular," said the youth. "I made a journey hither with one Youssouff, a

Dervish, dressed as you are dressed, who invited me to the mid-day meal."

"Adjaib! — Strange," said the Dervish. "Could it be an Afreet—the semblance of the dead Youssouff!"

"Perhaps," said the Circassian, "a dervish at another convent."

"No!" said Khaled. "The Goolshany opposite the mosque of Moyed."

"This is the Goolshany," said the Dervish, "and there is the Moyed" (pointing to the mosque of that name) through the door way, in which direction Khaled now looked and saw the camels with which he had passed the desert, and the camel-man, who came forward, and saluting Khaled with glee, took him aside, and said that before they dined with the dervishes, he should be obliged by letting him have the rest of his hire, of which he had only an instalment in starting at Gaza.

Khaled mechanically put his hands into his pocket to take out his purse and pay the hire of the camel-man, but finding it gone, stood, as it were, fixed to the spot. The

whole truth flashed upon him, and, at length, he became convinced that the pretended Dervish was a thief and an impostor. Ashamed to tell the Dervish at the convent that he had been bubbled by some one in their guise, he mechanically wished him good day, and related to the camel-man the circumstances of his sleep and the disappearance of the Dervish and his purse, as well as the ignorance of the people of the Goolshany of his whereabouts, and proposed that they should go at once to the Kitchen of Black Honey, where his baggage was deposited, when he would pay the camel-driver. At the first moment the camel-driver frankly expressed his surprise and regret at the circumstance, but as they went along he grew thoughtful; and it was evident that his suspicions were excited, and that he kept his eye on Khaled, and seemed unable to make out the mystery.

After a quarter of an hour's walk they came to the Mudbach Assal-el-Essouad, or Kitchen of Black Honey, and on entering it, Khaled wondered at its meanness and shabbiness. Formerly famous for a particular honey pastry,

which was renowned through Cairo a century before, it was now become a khan for the people of the Fayoum. Khaled looked surprised, and saw in one corner an old peasant of that part of Egypt, with deep brown tanned skin and white bushy eyebrows and beard, splitting wood: beside him was a woman milking a goat, and at the other, two donkeys tethered together, while all the rafters were black with the smoke of fire kindled for cooking.

"Where is my baggage?" said Khaled to the porter.

"Your baggage!" said the porter. "How should I know?"

Khaled turned round, and said to the Bedouin, "To what room was my baggage consigned?"

"To that one in the wooden gallery," said the Bedouin, pointing to the first floor.

"I understand you not," said the porter; "that was the baggage of Khaled ebn Sheikh Zobar, who came here and took away his baggage. I doubted his word, asked for his seal-ring, and he showed it me, as well as to the

Coptic Miller, who can read, and said it was his ring."

Khaled felt for his ring, and missing it, took a turn in the court-yard, in the utmost agitation, while the porter hinted to the camel-man that he suspected Khaled to be one of the band of thieves and impostors, whose ingenuities and depredations had baffled all the skill of the Waly and police-officers for several months. The mind of the camel-man once set in this direction, he began to call to mind the evasive answers that he had given relative to his business in Egypt; his silence and reserve on the route—the strange and apparently intimate acquaintance he had suddenly struck with the Dervish, and adding a variety of other circumstances, insignificant and unimportant in themselves, including the small carpet of the pretended Dervish being at that moment slung on the arm of Khaled, he arrived at the conclusion that it was a joint affair between the Dervish and him, that he had been in some adventure of plunder in Syria; and on Khaled coming forward and declaring that he had no

money, and had been robbed, the Bedouin broke out with violence, believing that his object was to cheat him out of his camel-hire.

" An admirable journey," said he, " have we made from Gaza to the guarded city of Cairo, and the Bedouin should serve for nought —no hire for the Bedouin—no fodder for the camel—no camel for the merchant—by Allah ! The world would come to a strange pass. No ! no ! I will have my right, if it be out of your flesh. To the Cadi—to the Cadi."

" Nay," said Khaled, " you have received my baggage, and are responsible, or else this porter."

" There is no power but in God Almighty," said the porter, arising with rage from the ground on which he had been seated, and putting down his black short chibouque, without a mouth-piece. " What ! you doubt the security of the Kitchen of Black Honey. Hear him, you Moslems. Hadji," continued he, crying aloud to the man splitting the wood, " did not the man of the baggage show me the seal-ring, in presence of yourself and your wife and

the Coptic Miller? Did he not, on my again doubting, open the bag, telling me beforehand what was in it? No doubt that you are the prince of 'impostors.'"

"No doubt," said the Bedouin, "this is all a trick to swindle me out of my hire; so away to the cadi, where you will, at least, have my debt to pay."

Khaled seeing resistance useless — the Bedouin, his assistant, the man from Fayoum, and a neighbour attracted by the dispute, now all went in a body to the cadi to have the case adjudged. The hall of justice was a large and noble one, but at the time we speak of, in a rather dilapidated condition. A divan of green cloth ran all round, at the farther end of which sat the judge, a genteel-looking elderly man of very small stature, who, from time to time, examined documents, with spectacles of elastic steel, that adhered to the bridge of the nose without earlets.

As judge, he had a character for the strictest impartiality. No sooner had he received a bribe from the defendant than nice scruples of

conscience caused him to suspend the consideration of the case until the plaintiff by a corresponding act of liberality restored the scales of justice to the equilibrium. If the wealth of the parties admitted it, he sometimes repeated this pleasant process, and if a mistake crept in at the conclusion of a law-suit, it could scarcely be said that virtue was not rewarded; for what is cash but the representative of some industry and economy of one's youth, or, even in the case of the *bon vivant*, of some virtue of his father or grandfather.

When the party entered, another case was going on. A man of the middle class, seated low down the divan, had a roll of bonds in his hands, and was apostrophizing the Cadi with great earnestness, occasionally casting a look of indignation to the opposite party. He insisted the bonds were in perfect order, signed, sealed, and delivered; but the cadi, in order to make assurance doubly sure, proposed to alter the ground, and make it hinge, more or less, upon the oral testimony of those who might have been cognizant of the transaction; in short, to

substitute for documentary evidence, that of oral testimony on oath; a decision which invariably proves highly satisfactory to those who deal in that low-priced commodity.

The opposite party, who was much better dressed, sat at a higher place on the divan, demurely looking down to the ground; and on hearing this agreeable announcement, which overturned the supposed validity of the bonds he had given, attempted to repress an incipient smile; but the irresistible smile of inward content, gradually mastering the power of artificial indignation at the bronze-visaged effrontery of the plaintiff, he felt conscious that his power over the muscles of his face was not adequate to the occasion; so he lifted up his two hands, and casting up the white of his eye, broke into a grand climax. "Ahmed Effendi! are you a Frank? I swear to you by our Lord, and you will not believe me."

"What!" said Ahmed Effendi, "you will belie your own bond and signature; and have the audacity to hold this language to me in a court of justice!"

"Silence!" said the Cadi, with an indignant wave of his hand. "In the sanctuary of justice, both parties must be equally heard. The observation that you address to the plaintiff is impertinent and irrelevant. I will allow no bandying of abuse in the hall of judgment. You have heard my decision; so let me hear no more of these impertinent and irrelevant observations."

So saying, the Cadi frowned on Ahmed Effendi, who took up his bonds, and silently walked out of court—the defendant taking his leave in high spirits; on which the Cadi looked curiously to the party standing at the lower end of the room, and said, "What affair is this?"

"This man has had my camel," said the Bedouin, "from Gaza, and he refuses to pay."

"Nay," said Khaled, "speak not of my want of will, but of my want of power." He then related all the circumstances of his journey from Bilbeis; on which the porter declared that he was one of the *mezaureen* or impostors who assume all disguises, *Hindy* and *Gindy*—Hindoo and Trooper.

"He is no swindler, I warrant," said a bold female voice from behind.

The Cadi looked up, the litigants turned round, and saw the figure of the wife of the old wood-splitting man from the Fayoum, who, fixing an angry look on both the porter and her husband, cried out, "Is it not a shame to oppress a poor youth, who perhaps has left father and mother, and whom you would lodge with thieves in a jail!"

"Did ever mortal see such a woman!" said the old man from the Fayoum; "she would command and forbid in the house of the Cadi!"

"What brought you to Cairo?" said the judge to Khaled.

"The wish to see it," said the youth, with some hesitation.

"What money have you?"

"These few piastres," said the youth, showing some little white money.

"Well, then, I must send you to the waly, or criminal governor."

"For what?" said the youth. "I asked

for my baggage, given and consigned to the porter. Let me have my baggage, and the Bedouin shall have his hire, if I sell every stitch of clothes I possess."

"He knows where his baggage is," said the porter, "else how could a seal-ring be presented with his name, on the day of his arrival in Cairo?"

"If you put him to the question he will confess," said the Bedouin.

"Oppression of the innocent stranger!" again cried out the old woman.

Just at this moment, the Cadi, looking at his watch, saw that it approached the hour of mid-day prayer. Now he was in the habit of saying his prayers regularly, and immediately thereafter dining heartily and sleeping soundly. He at once determined not to let business interfere with spiritual duties. "So," he said hastily, "that it was a case of simple debt, until further proof was adduced;" and Khaled was forthwith consigned to the debtors' jail, on the ground floor—the Bedouin persuaded he was a swindler, and anxious for him to get

a drubbing; the woman from the Fayoum pitying his fate, and her husband telling her that she was more in need of discipline than the youth, and that he would settle accounts when they returned to the khan.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEBTORS' JAIL.

We must now beg the reader to accompany us to the debtors' jail of Cairo, where "truth is stranger than fiction," where, if not crime, at least folly, is arrested in its headlong career —where misfortune, miscalculation, and disappointment mope the sad fretful hour away—the nipping frost of expectation's tender leaves —reminding one of the rhymes and experiences of our own Burns,

> "The best-laid schemes of mice and men
> Gang aft a-gley."

The Beit-el Cadi, or palace of justice, in Cairo, forms three sides of a square, adjoining the high street that runs from the citadel to

the Mosque of Hakem, flanked as it is by the high magnificent gates of Succour and Victory. But the new offices to the eastward of the quadrangle did not exist at the time we speak of, and in their place was a remnant of the palace of Beysery, one of the generals of Bibars, who, next to Saladin, was the most warlike and successful of the Sultans of Egypt. The palace we speak of, now in a great part demolished, had been the place of entertainment of Frank and Greek ambassadors during the early period of the crusades. It came into the hands of Beysery, in the year 659 of the Hegira, and the Sultan Bibars one day said to him, "How can you throw away so much money in rebuilding a palace?" To which Beysery answered, "That the rumour may go forth to the enemy that only an Emir of the Sultan indulged in such regal magnificence." On which Bibars gave him a bag of gold and the marble requisite to complete it; and the palace remained in the hands of his family until the year 736 of the Hegira; but a great part of it had become ruinous and was taken down before the beginning

of the nineteenth century, and the western side of the quadrangle was enclosed by a wall of moderate height, beyond which the gorgeous masses of the Mosques of Barkouk and the two Kalaons towered over the intervening ruinous houses and scattered palms.

A suitor might be seen pacing anxiously up and down, with law documents in his hand; long slips of thick-glazed paper, almost black with the close writing, and a few seals at the bottom of them imprinted in bluish ink. The successful litigant might easily be recognised, by his quick agitated pace, and smiling satisfied countenance, occasionally tinged with a cloud of reflection, at the pecuniary sacrifice his success had cost him. The unsuccessful suitor, instead of betraying silent disappointment, as with us in Europe, usually gave way to the most violent imprecations, exclamations, and affirmations, generally addressed to some impotent servitor, or humble officer about the court, whose silent shrugs of the shoulders, and philosophic resignation, to what was written in his neighbour's book of fate, formed

a contrast to the violence of the non-suited suitor.

A coffee-house keeper had ensconced himself under a vaulted gallery, which had once, in the halcyon days of Islamism, resounded with the merriment of the stout troopers who had rolled back the tide of Tartar invasion to the mountains of Kurdistan; and, to complete the picture, a few cats, whose hunger anticipated the afternoon prayer, slept out the appointed time, or mewed in chorus under the shade of the wall, for, by the munificence of a deceased Cairene, the cats of Cairo are wards of the Cadi's chancery. Every day, at the hour of afternoon prayer, an ample banquet is provided for all and sundry cats that present themselves; the cost of which is defrayed out of a piece of land, beyond the northern suburbs, bequeathed for the purpose, which is called to this day, Gheyt-el-Kota, or Garden of the Cat.

On the afternoon of the day following the adventure we have described, two men entered the court-yard, just after the prayer of

Asr, when the sated cats were all dispersing again to their various habitations, and were immediately accosted by a person at the foot of the steps of the great alcove.

"Sheikh Cassim," said this person to the elder of the two, "what cheer? I heard, yesterday, that your mountain of corn at Boulak was in great danger from the inundation."

"Elhamdulillah!—Praise be to God!—it is saved! I had invested a large part of this year's disposable capital in the corn trade, and as the waters rose with rapidity, foot by foot, I made sure of seeing a large part of my property disappear; but, by dint of great activity, the smaller mound of corn of the lower level was removed in time, and the higher level was unattained by the waters, although they rose within a quarter of a foot of it."

"I give you joy, Sheikh Cassim, for you make a good use of your wealth."

"Thank heaven the corn is safe," said Sheikh Cassim, moving away, when he found that the other began to praise him, and they parted,

Sheikh Cassim and his companion going to a passage at the south-east corner of the court-yard, where they were stopped by a common Turk, with a short Kurdish petticoat, who, without ever moving from his seat, and scarcely looking at those who addressed him, asked which of the prisoners they wanted?

"All and sundry," quoth the Sheikh. "I have had a piece of good luck, and am many hundred purses richer than I thought I was likely to be; so I have taken a fancy to clear your prison of the poorest and most deserving debtors; and at my exit, your bakshish shall be forthcoming."

At that magic word, the jailor with the Kurdish petticoat laid down his half-filled pipe bowl, and, starting up with alacrity, saluted the new comers, and forthwith showed a kind of cordial desire to second the benevolence of the humane Sheikh Cassim; and, leading them into a dark passage, passed a brilliant eulogy on the intentions of the Sheikh.

"The condition of a prisoner," said he, "is much to be pitied; and, although not so much

so as the poor jailor, is a deserving object of compassion,—for the jailor is as much imprisoned, and fast bound to his key and his bench, and has as little liberty as the prisoner inside."

But Sheikh Cassim showed no sign of being of the same opinion, and the jailor opening the door with a large wooden key, ushered them into the jail of the guarded city of Cairo.

The apartment was about twenty feet high; the light admitted by two barred windows close to the roof, which were unglazed; the walls were perfectly bare, and had not been white-washed for many a long day: but there were no caricatures of the jailor, no obscenity, as may be seen on prison walls in Europe, but scrolls, at various places, showed where the Moslem might have passed a long hour, with scribbling an occasional verse from the Koran. A luxuriant spider's web, of thick and tangled texture, fluttered in the upper corner of the room, with the slight breeze which ventilated the apartment,—apt emblem of desolation and misery;—and a mat covered the floor of the

prison, on which the inmates were squatted, cross-legged.

Folly, knavery, and misfortune, seemed to have their various representatives, each wearing the badge of their order, with a distinctness not to be mistaken; and the better to make his observations, Sheikh Cassim took off his shoes, and sat down in the midst of them. Foremost and uppermost was a townsman, as prim and well-dressed, as if he were entering a mosque on Friday, at noon; and at the bottom, a beggar, in the extreme of misery, both as regarded looks and garments. Others were lounging about, and some asleep on their mattresses.

"A welcome to you, Effendi!" said the townsman who had just become bankrupt, and was in high spirits; "what has brought you here?"

"I am in prison," said Sheikh.

"What! really imprisoned?" said the dandified townsman, scarcely able to credit it. "What is your case?"

"I will tell you it, if every one of those present will tell me his case."

"That is soon done," said the townsman, while the other prisoners whispered to each other. "There are no secrets here;—that man is in for four hundred piastres, and that for five hundred, and that other for two hundred and sixty, and that other for two hundred."

"And yourself?" said Sheikh Cassim.

"For as many thousands; but my story is a long one."

"And who," said Sheikh Cassim, "is that poor wretch out of the circle, who seems pining away?"

"That, sir, is a Bedouin, who was entrusted with a camel; but it died in his keeping, poor fellow! You see how he looks at the bars, and sighs to fly away. But he is now old and stupid."

Most of the prisoners were in a rather jovial and talkative humour, for perhaps those who think least of the future, are often most indifferent to the fortunes of the present.

Half way down the room was an elderly man, with the dress and air of an irregular trooper, his forehead was high, and features

Caucasian, even to the minutest of Nature's chisel-marks, but his skin was nearly as dark as that of a negro, not coarse, but fine in the texture. Sheikh Cassim asked him where he came from; and he answered, "Itchili, in Asia Minor;" but from whence his parents had come, or whence he had been imported in his youth, he could not tell. This figure of ebony, strange to say, complained of the heat of Egypt.

When Sheikh Cassim asked him for his history, he answered, "I made a campaign, and was at the siege of Jaffa with Mohammed Bey, and was the second to enter the breach. See," said he, "where Daher's people left their mark;" and, pulling up his sleeve, showed a gun-shot scar in his arm. "Mohammed Bey was a good friend of mine, for I was young and stout, and could handle sword, pistol, musket, lance, or dagger with any of them all, but now I am getting old, and yet," added he, laughing in his tears, "let me get out of this infernal hole, and I have still mettle in me for a day's fight or a year's campaign."

One young man, dressed as a townsman of the second or third order, reclined on a cushion, and had been admitted the previous day. His face was pale, and his eyes sunk in the sockets, and he occasionally sighed. Sheikh Cassim asked him his case, and raising himself on his cushion spoke as follows :—

"I began life as a servant, but you know that service, although an easy life, brings no gain, and being told that I should make more as a miller, I entered into partnership with another man in the quarter of Abdeen, and we took a mill ; but let no man think to change his trade without paying for his schooling. I soon lost the little money I had saved ; I was obliged to give my horse for a sum below its value to pay a debt ; and from one difficulty to another, I am at length here. This is the second day of my confinement, but although my body is in the Cadi's prison, my mind is with my two little children in Abdeen. I have sought to sleep out my grief." So saying, he pulled out a blue pocket handkerchief and wiped his tears.

"Come, come, cousin, keep up your spirits,"

said Sheikh Cassim. "*Yom naam! yom bas!*—A day of grace, a day of evil! When things seem at their best the bad is brewing; when at their worst, the good must come."

"So saith my head to my heart," said the debtor; "and small comfort do I get from the reflection."

"And who is this young man beside you?" said Sheikh Cassim.

"He is in the same case as myself, with respect to his recent entrance into the prison; but while I think only of my family, I dare say he would be happy to drive the recollection out of his mind."

Sheikh Cassim looked at his companion, and saw that he was a sun-burnt youth, about fifteen years of age, looking as lugubrious as possible. Sheikh Cassim asked him his case, and he answered with great modesty, "I have been married a short time, and incurred considerable expense at the marriage, and subsequently with entertaining my wife's relations. I thought the joy for our union would never end, so constantly did I entertain all and sundry. 'Welcome,'

said I each day to each new comer; each dinner party seemed to multiply the number of my new cousins and connections. At last, one day when my money was all spent, I pawned one of my wife's ornaments, and the number of my cousins seemed to diminish as suddenly as they had expanded. My wife then led me the life of a dog, with her stunning clack and ferocious temper; and having at length asserted my authority, she called me before the cadi, and being unable to produce her ornament, or her dowry, she falsely accused me of having hidden money, and I have thus been clapped into prison."

On hearing this statement, Sheikh Hamood, the companion of Sheikh Cassim, indulged in so loud and unseemly a roar of laughter, as attracted the attention of all the prisoners upon him. Sheikh Hamood had something of the appearance of a satyr — a receding forehead, long nose, towards which the strongly pronounced upper lip seemed half disposed to curl; a countenance deeply indented with the ravages of small pox, a certain dilation of his nostrils,

and an arch drollery in the expression of his eyes, made his visage like an antique mask of comedy.

"You ought," said Sheikh Hamood, "to have treated your relations as Nusreddin Effendi, of the guarded city of Akshehr, treated those who gave him gifts."

"And how did he treat them?" said the youth.

"A man having presented him with a hare, he asked him to come and assist to eat it. The donor of the hare having come with all his family, Hodja said 'welcome;' but the hare being insufficient to dine so many, other dishes were prepared. A few days afterwards some more free-and-easy persons presented themselves for the hospitality of the Hodja, Nusreddin Effendi. 'A welcome, a double welcome,' again said Hodja, in his inexhaustible goodness. 'Who are you?' 'We are the friends of the man who gave you the hare.' And Hodja again did the honours of an ample entertainment. A few days after that, another set of friends presented themselves to our friend

the Hodja. 'And who are you?' said he to his new guests, with the most imperturbable good humour. 'We are the neighbours of the friends of the family of the man who gave you the hare.' 'Thrice welcome,' said the Hodja, 'pray be seated while the entertainment is prepared.' Instead, however, of the pilaff and the kabab, the entertainment consisted of a bowl of pure spring water. 'Is this the way,' said the stranger, 'in which you treat the neighbours of the friends of the family of the man who has presented you with a hare?' 'Precisely so,' said Hodja. 'This water came from the same spring as the water that cooked the hare.'"

"If I had done so," said the young Kurd, "I should never have been here."

Sheikh Cassim then came to Khaled and asked him his case; when he related all that had happened to him since his arrival at Bilbeis, the tale seemed to interest him, and he at first doubted his word, but, by cross questions, at length became persuaded that his story was in the main features true.

During all this time the prisoners were whis-

pering with each other, and occasionally looking at Sheikh Cassim, so as to show that he was the object of their conversation; and the well-dressed debtor said aloud, "I know your errand; you are sent by Ibrahim Bey from the citadel to inquire how we are treated."

"No such thing," said Sheikh Cassim; "my visit has a totally different object. The day before yesterday the Nile rose with such rapidity, that I thought there was the absolute certainty of my losing a mountain of grain in store at Boulak; but by the permission of God it remained untouched, and I have taken a fancy, on finding myself so much richer than I counted on, to clear the debtors' jail of all those in for small sums."

"Allah Yebarak Feek!—May God bless you," said the debtor; and one of them, with a green turban, weak eyes, and a beard artificially dyed red, said aloud, "*Fatehat!*" "The Opening." On which all the debtors, holding up their hands, and looking upwards, whispered in chorus the short and impressive opening of the Koran.

"Praise be to God! the Lord of all creatures, the most merciful, the king of the day of judgment: Thee do we worship, and of Thee we beg assistance. Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom Thou hast been gracious; not of those against whom Thou art incensed, nor of those who go astray."

This sudden appeal from the walls of a prison to the throne of Omnipotence had its due effect on Sheikh Cassim; and as his thoughts rose from the puisne judges of men to the King of the day of judgment, he repeated those sublime accents of praise, not mechanically, but in a manner corresponding to the strength of his religious sentiment.

"God is great in this world," said Sheikh Cassim, aloud, "for, as the poet of Agem says, 'He takes two drops of water, with one of which he fashions man after His own Image, while the other becomes a pearl in the depths of the ocean; but the chief attribute of Omnipotence is the kingship of the day of judgment—the only remaining autocracy, after all

sultans, kings, and emirs, with their powers and principalities, have been swept away.'"

"There is no man in Cairo like Sheikh Cassim," said the well-dressed bankrupt, with the greatest energy of emphasis; "for fifteen years I have known him, and I should like to see the man that had a word to say against him. Oh, Sheikh Cassim! God spared no trouble at the manufacture of your head and heart. Do just recollect how you were calumniated in your absence by the swindler Ali-el-Sabbagh, when we were at Siout with four Mograbbins and the Dacroory. I always thought you the best and most generous of men in Cairo. *Naseeb*, such is fate—you are in luck, and I without luck—but I must not complain. Inshallah! this day will commence a lasting friendship between us."

To this, Sheikh Cassim, embarrassed, returned no answer, and told his companion, Sheikh Hamood, to take a note of the debtors and their debts. He began with the trooper, who shed tears, and said, "How singular! I have given my blood in my youth without recompense, and a stranger relieves me. Oh,

Effendi! how can I requite you. I may yet die in Itchili," said he.

"And I," said the miller, his eyes filling with tears, "see my two children dancing with joy at my return to the Abdeen. Ya-Allah! Great is thy power in making a pearl and a man, but greater in giving him a heart like that of Sheikh Cassim."

When it came to the turn of Khaled, he said, "Accept this relief as a loan to be repaid."

"As soon as it is in my power to repay, and rest assured that if ever it lie in my way, I would willingly requite ten times its value; but it is not likely that I can ever have it in my power to render any service to the noble and generous Sheikh Cassim."

"One does not know," said Sheikh Cassim, "what is written in the book of fate. Let no man think himself above the good will of another, or say I am so much more rich, happy, and powerful than he, that I can be indifferent to his good will."

When it came to the turn of the Kurd, he

positively refused to be relieved. "I will be grateful to you," said he, "as if you had done me a service treble this value; but not one step will I stir out of here until my wife's pride be subdued, and that of all her kindred."

"La Kurdy Theleel,
Ou Bedawy Baheel,"

thought Cassim to himself, which being interpreted is, "There is no spiritless Kurd, or ungenerous Bedouin." "These sums," continued he aloud, "will all be paid this night or to-morrow. I would fain have opened the prison gates to this Kurd, but the young barb must be allowed his fling. He that on an occasion like this allows me to acquit his obligations, is the generous giver, and I the favoured receiver."

"If the riches you seek consist in that," said the Kurd, "look round you and count the obligations you have already conferred, and be not avaricious of wealth of that sort."

"There is nothing so rare as a spiritless Kurd, or an ungenerous Bedouin," again muttered Sheikh Cassim to himself; and as he

rose to go, the showily dressed bankrupt said, somewhat taken aback, "Are you going, Sheikh Cassim, without asking me the particulars of my case."

To this Sheikh Cassim made no answer, but Sheikh Hamood, his companion, with one of his loud laughs, said, "No; because all the bazaar of the Ghoreey knows it already," and he was proceeding to ask him satirically the particulars of various ugly transactions, when Sheikh Cassim rose to go out, and the bankrupt losing temper, cried, as they passed the door, "God curse your father and mother, you thousand-fold bladder of conceit." All the prisoners, except this man, blessed Sheikh Cassim, as he went out at the door; and Sheikh Hamood, his companion, said in great glee to the jailor, when they got out into the passage, "God bless Sheikh Cassim, who is going to relieve all the prisoners."

"It is not possible, surely!" said the jailor, disagreeably surprised, and chop-fallen; "what remuneration is this five piastre piece for losing all the prisoners? I thought," said he, with the

blood rising to his face in anger, "that you intended to release only the poorest of the prisoners, who afford me no perquisite; and now I learn that you intend to cut me out of all the odds and ends of those prisoners, who need convenience and comforts, and messages and business to be transacted for them out of doors. Come, be just as well as generous, and make me up my loss."

"You have your salary on which you can live," said Sheikh Cassim, "and I will be bound to say that the prison will be filled soon enough again."

"And who knows when it may be filled again?" said the jailor.

"It is not every day that we have such a prisoner as that merchant from the Ghoreey."

"We have left him, then, for you," said Sheikh Hamood.

"Then he must make up for the others," said the jailor, with an angry shake of the head; and Sheikh Cassim, again taking his case into consideration, added another five piastres to his present, which was then quadruple the present value of that coin.

CHAPTER V.

THE BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EDUCATION OF KHALED.

Before we proceed further, it is now requisite to say something of the birth, parentage, and antecedents of Khaled.

The inhabitants of Syria consider their climate to constitute the golden mean between the hot and the cold regions of the world as it is known to themselves, being equally removed from the long snow-fed winter of Armenia, and the suffocating winds and fierce heats of the valley of the Nile; while those regions of their native country that immediately adjoin the north or the south, partake in some measure of the peculiar character of the extremes beyond them. The pilgrim that lands at Jaffa, finds in its

palms and orange groves, in the meanness and misery of the villages, where the dark-complexioned water-carrier may be seen with his ass and distended goat-skin, much of the Egyptian character. Northwards and eastwards of the ancient city of Laodicea, where the Orontes approaches the Mediterranean, and the white peak of Mount Cassius, seen far and wide, is a beacon to the mariner, we find that union of serene and rugged beauty that is peculiar to Italian landscape.

In this part of Syria the sky is of a more tender azure than in the torrid south; herbage covers the wide champaign from early spring to far in the advanced summer; nor have the plains a steppe-like monotony, for they are bounded by hills picturesquely wooded; while here and there the remains of an ancient town proclaim the fugitive power of storied races and dynasties, and the eternal youth and beauty of the works of the Creator.

If, leaving the plain where the swarthy herd, in simple robe of undyed wool, sings the blithe lay while he tends his cattle, we ascend to these

eminences, the graceful remains of a classic temple occasionally emerge into the warmth of day, while close to their base the chill mountain-stream murmurs darkly pellucid under the thickly tangled boughs of the beech, the walnut, and the horse-chestnut. The whole region is one of enchantment to the traveller, and well deserves a Gaspar Poussin to render those unruffled seas, viewed athwart the wide sweeping plain, in all the resplendent ethereal tranquillity of summer's noon, — a golden Claude, with the equable delicacy of the consummate artist, to throw over classic temple and tufted mount, the soft effulgent haze of lessening day,—or a Salvator to plunge into the gloomy gorge, and give the grandeur of the yawning rock, or the sombre sublimity of the trackless woods of gnarled oak.

If we pass from inanimate to animate nature, we find in the north and south of Syria, a complete identity of aboriginal mountain races. The Druse of Lebanon, and the Nosairi of the northern chain, are in every feature, in cerebral conformation and mental disposition, the same

race as the Jews of old—all three ancient inhabitants of the mountains of Syria; but while the manners and traditions of the Jew-mountaineer of the south have pervaded every clime, and, mediately or immediately, leavened the whole moral world, a diabolical ring surrounds the mountaineer of the north, and he remains within the narrow limits prescribed by one of the obscurest and most grovelling superstitions that history records; for the Nosairis and the Ismaelis are descendants of the Assassins of the Middle Ages, who are familiarly known to the apprentice who goes to see a Christmas pantomime, and even to the inmates of our nurseries,—through the fairy tale of "Number Nip; or, The Old Man of the Mountain."

Such were the people among whom Khaled was brought up, and such the school in which a native tendency to the good and the true was perverted, and in which an understanding naturally lucid was obscured. Nor were his domestic circumstances likely to alleviate the disadvantage of creed and nation, for his father was a narrow-minded fanatic, and his mother,

the best of women, but little elevated above the intelligence of the cow which she milked. It is, therefore, not necessary to dwell on Khaled's childhood; so soon as he was born, he received, like all other Nosairi and Ismaeli children, the name, Zain,—he was duly circumcised, and his name of Khaled was determined on by opening a book at random, and taking the first proper name that presented itself.

Taraf-el-Gharb, the native place of this young man, adjoined some very good land, which was principally devoted to the culture of tobacco, and of which Lattakia is the mart; and under the name of that sea-port, is known as the best in the Levant, and bears the highest price in Cairo and Constantinople, its peculiar fragrance being produced by hanging the leaves of tobacco for six months in the huts of the peasantry, along the rafters, and smoking them with an herb called Ezr. This atmosphere would choke a European, but the eyes and lungs of the peasants are accustomed to it; and these economical conditions have so pervaded language, and all the relations of life, that when

a villager says to his wife—Make a fire, the word he uses is, "Dahhany—make smoke."

A Roman town or village had existed in this spot, as the road between Antioch and Laodicea was in some places traceable by fragments of broad flags down in the plain, as well as by a passage over the hill, in some places cut clear through the rock. The house of the Sheikh was a Roman one, of solid masonry, the style of which was scarcely altered from the days of Constantine or Julian. That is the supposition of the historian of those transactions; but the most authentic traditions of the village were, that those gigantic remains were constructed before the creation of man.

The smoking process went on in the lower vaults, but the apartment above, which was long and narrow, had its broken Mosaic pavement covered with a mat, while a Turkey carpet and some cushions were the only furniture of the other end of the room, above which was a picture neither framed nor glazed, but revealed by a large quantity of plaster, peeled off the wall; a fresco representing a

graceful young man in bright flowing robes, entering a triumphal archway of the city seated on a car, and a goddess descending from above, placing a crown on his head. Of the Emperor Julian's reception at Antioch, Khaled had not the least knowledge; but it was the sight of this faded fresco that first awakened his youthful intelligence. He would gaze on it, seeking to fathom the unknown, and leap over the bounds of time and space; he felt there were strange and curious worlds beyond the limits of Taraf-el-Gharb: these he not only longed to see, but sighed for a perusal of those records which might enable him to look up the long avenue in which the brave and the fair, the awe-striking kings and tuneful bards, had mingled in feast and fray, and all made room for never-halting Time. He began to care less for the society of those of his own age, and felt an instinctive desire for the larger experiences of hoary sagacity; and one of those ever-recurring revolts against the old Turkish system of government (now happily in a great measure obsolete) inured him to the perils and fatigues

of mountain warfare. So having attracted the notice of the nation by his bravery, and fully arrived at the years of discretion, it was determined to initiate him in the mysteries of the religion.

One day in the summer of 1796, Khaled followed a grey-bearded Sheikh into the thick woods behind the village, and began slowly to mount the hill above. After a quarter of an hour's ascent, they came to an open and comparatively level part of the forest traversed by a goat tract, at the farthest part of which, just under the shade of a tree, was the red speck of the turban of a lad who tended the goats. "Let us be seen by no one," said the old man, as, without showing himself outside the grove, he turned suddenly to the left; and when the dull tinkle of the bells at the necks of the goats had become almost imperceptible, he again ascended, followed by Khaled, through a thick part of the forest, a full hour's exertion, to a secluded nook of the hill, under a toppling rock, where a few square yards of opening enabled them to overlook the whole amphitheatre beyond

which the waters of the Mediterranean, filling up a considerable part of the perpendicular, showed how elevated their position was above the level of the sea, being near that point where the thick woods that clothe the nether portions of Cassius terminate, and the clear open space of the summit commences.

Here the old man stopped short, looked up the face of the rock, as if to assure himself that it had neither eyes nor ears; he then looked round in all directions, and, holding his hands above his eyes, sought to penetrate the gloom of the forest below, lest intrusion might come from that quarter. He then lay down, and applying his hand to his ear, attempted to catch any sound that might be on the air, but not a goat bell was to be heard, nor a resonance, except that of the gentle rustling of the foliage from the western breeze, and the scream of a bird of prey wheeling among the rocks above.

"Now is the time," said he to Khaled, when going along the base of the rock, between which and the hanging woods that broke away from its base, and grew on the slope below, there was

only room for a narrow pathway. He stopped short, and, with the assistance of Khaled, removed several large moss-grown stones, and, creeping inside, Khaled perceived that they were in a wide cavern, which was not entirely dark, for through a large aperture in the roof the sun-light, broken by the intervention of thickly-leaved shrubs, gave sufficiency of light and air to the apartment.

" You see," said the old man, " that all provision has been made for us," pointing to a recess entirely covered by rock, in which was a mat, a couple of mattresses, cooking utensils, and provisions; while, at the other extremity of this large cavern, was a spring flowing from the dark womb of the mountain, and again finding its way by subterranean recesses to swell an unknown stream. Here Khaled lived for five weeks with the Old Man of the Mountain, who had the highest reputation for sanctity and erudition. Ten persons had previously been, at Khaled's request, sureties for his strict observance of profound secrecy on all matters appertaining to the mysteries of the faith: and in

the beginning of the sixth week, the Old Man of the Mountain, being fully satisfied that Khaled would never reveal it, he entrusted him with the awful secret of Ethnayn.

In the first ages of Islamism the holy text of pike and mace had compelled millions, dwelling on the Euphrates and the Tigris, to conform to the external observances of the new religion, who in their hearts remained true to the tenets of Zoroaster and the Magi. Even after time had thinned the ranks of the secret adherents of fire-worship, the names of Ali on the one hand, and Abou Bekr on the other, were still the watchwords of the two great political parties into which the Moslem world was divided. The doctrine of the legitimacy of the succession of Omar and Abou Bekr to the Imamate having been upheld by the Omeia Caliphs of Damascus and the Abbaside Caliphs of Bagdad, it followed, as a matter of course, that Ali was the rallying cry of all denominations of malcontents.

The innumerable heresies that sprung up during the first four hundred years after Mohammed,

mostly in Irak and Coufa, may be traced to several causes besides impatience of the temporal yoke of the Abbasides. The success of the imposture of Mohammed had led many cunning and bold men to hope for similar results in their own favour. The translation of the works of the Greek philosophers into Arabic promoted scepticism, and the precepts of Mohammed, relative to fasting, prayer, and other observances, were too rigid not to produce a reaction. Thus innumerable sects, whose system consisted in the renunciation of the exterior observances of Islamism and the allegorization of its precepts, had great success, and for some time shook the caliphate to its centre.

Extraordinary veneration for the memory of Ali, was the first article in the creed of these sects. The Nosairis and Ismaelis, not content with holding him to have been a prophet, and an imaum or pontiff, went a step further, and made him out an incarnation of the Divinity, while Mohammed was considered as a prophet. Adopting also the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, Abel and St. Peter were believed

to be previous incarnations of the Divinity; while Adam was represented as a prophet contemporary with the former, and Jesus with the latter of these incarnations. Ali is styled by the Nosairis, Ali el Ala, Emir el Nihl (Ali the High, the Prince of the Religion). They believe in the transmigration of souls, which is supposed to be justified by the circumstance of live animals having been seen with scars on their body, corresponding to wounds inflicted on individuals, which had produced death. The formula of prayer, used on the extraordinary occasion of the worship of the female womb, which was taken from the folds of the turban of a Kadmooseey Nosairi, who had been killed by an Arnout, although one of the greatest curiosities of Oriental literature that ever fell into the possession of the author of this work, and various other curious particulars of their manners, are unfit for publication in a work, the motto of which is *Virginibus Puerisque*, and need not be further alluded to.

CHAPTER VI.

KHALED FALLS IN LOVE.

KHALED was one day in the thick tangled wood that grew next the Armenian village, when a kid skipped past him, and a female form followed, laughing and breathless, after the animal.

Unobserved by the female, and interested by the pursuit, the unconscious ardour of which had led the young woman to a greater distance from the village than was usual, Khaled ran on, caught the kid, and placed it in the hands of the young lady, who was a Frank, recently come to reside in the Armenian village, and of whom Khaled had, for the first time, a near view.

She was about eighteen years of age, and

therefore, in those precocious climes, at the fullest development of beauty. Her height was perhaps rather below than above the average standard of female stature. Instead of the compressed waist of modern Europe, she wore the Aleppine female costume, which hung easily, but not loosely, about her frame. A shawl, of the finest cashmere, encircled her waist. Her countenance had the healthy paleness of warm climates, probably a result of her infancy passed in Egypt, for many of the Aleppino ladies, from the elevated situation and cold winter of that city, have the roseate cheeks of the north of Europe. A nose, like those of the friezes of the Parthenon, came straight down from the whitest brow, showing that Greek blood, in the female line, had been mingled with that of Italy. Her chin was somewhat deficient in development; but in spite of this departure from ideal *contour*, the expression of her countenance had something of a prepossessing piquancy, and the luxuriant disorder of her tresses, and the gay breathless excitement of the chase, might have suggested,

had she lived in the heroic dawn of mythology, such a figure as that which, idealized by Grecian sculpture, occupied, under the name of Diana, one of the most conspicuous places in the Pantheon of the ancients.

"And who are you?" said she to the young Sheikh, somewhat embarrassed; "let me know to whom I am indebted for this trouble."

"I am Khaled, the son of the Sheikh of the next village."

"What!" said she, as her eyes brightened up with satisfaction, "the same who, in the recent war, was the first to escalade the Arnaouts' tower, and then, at the risk of his own life, prevented the prisoners from being massacred by his own people?"

Khaled blushed in affirmative assent, at hearing his praise sounded by the most beautiful woman that he had ever seen; and the lady, loath to depart, found herself in a commonplace conversation, which, beginning thus in favourable prepossession, ended in something like reciprocal sympathy, for the confabulation was prolonged until she feared she might be

missed at home; and it will not surprise the reader, that that was not the last conversation of which the frisky kid was a safe confidant and mute listener, the interminable chambers of the castle, approached through thick woods from both villages, affording facilities for further prosecution of acquaintance, and a certain disposition of the blinds of the windows of the house in which the lady lived, serving as a preconcerted signal of the time of meeting.

Signora Melusina Moro, the young lady in question, was an orphan, who, on the death of her father, had been sent by her uncle in Cairo to her uncle in Aleppo, where she had become so attached to his wife, that, upon various pretexts, her return to her uncle at Cairo had been delayed; and on the death of the wife of Signor Giuseppe Moro, of Aleppo, he had, in order to allay his grief, and change the scene, taken his niece with him on a trip to the dales of Mount Cassius, whither the worthy old magazineer of his mercantile establishment had retired, with a small competency. Of a quick susceptible disposition, the young

lady had listened to the strange accounts that the old Armenian gave her of the faith of this people; and deluding herself as to the real state of her feelings, projected a conversion to Christianity of the handsome native, whose artless curiosity, modest intelligence, and reputation for courage, had so interested her; but she was soon constrained to confess to herself, that this romantic apostleship was a mental pretext to hide from herself the long vista of inconveniences inseparable from an attachment so incongruous.

The feelings of the young man were somewhat the converse of those of the lady. He began with the soft allurements of love, and entered into a perusal of a copy of the Gospels in Arabic which she gave him, with something of the deference and levity, often mingled, in obedience to the strangest caprices of the object of an attachment; but as he read on, was so struck with the novelty of the matter, that he gave it a second and calmer perusal, which produced such a resonance on his native goodness of disposition and openness of intellect,

that belief in his own religion was somewhat shaken; and to the pleasing pain of love, was soon added the distracting torture of religious doubt; and as the result of further perusals, upon a young man gifted with a considerable sympathy of imagination, which enabled him, although a semi-barbarian, to withdraw himself from the fetters of so strange a creed, may not be altogether uninteresting or unworthy of a passing notice, we beg the reader's pardon for a digression not usual in works of this description.

From the first, inspired with interest in the extraordinary history detailed by the four Evangelists, he was successively affected with admiration of a morality, to him equally novel and elevating—a wonder at miracles, so minutely detailed, and a woe at the conclusion of an earthly career, the very incarnation of despised and rejected benefaction. Not much of a geographer, he yet knew, in common with all Syria, that the Christian faith covered a fair part of the earth; and he remembered the parable of the mustard seed, that could

not grow from such small beginnings, without an inherent vigour peculiar to itself; and comparing the immensity of Christianity with the exiguity of the faith of Ali, he successively passed in review those points in which this new faith differed most essentially from that in which he had been nurtured.

The love of enemies struck him as the greatest contrast to the vindictive traditions of his natal soil. At first it seemed to him a weakness or effeminacy which he could not realize, but gradually, and mustard-seed fashion, the idea grew upon him, that conformity to this doctrine was the highest triumph of the heart and reason, while the serpent-like wisdom was the defence provided against any evil results of this principle; for even benevolence was to be exercised under the controlling guidance of prudence, and good was occasionally to be done in secret, as much for the sake of the benefactor as of the benefited.

In the superior place assigned to the partner of man in this new code, compared with that under which he lived, he could scarcely fail, in

the case of the individual in whom he felt the deepest interest, to recognise, as a tree is known by its fruit, something inexpressibly superior to his native code. He saw that rational liberty without licence, produced a self-respect and an intelligence which, without detracting from the softer affections, formed a companion more worthy of the dignity of human nature than the absolutism of the Eastern system that he saw around him; and yet, that in Christianity there is nothing to check the principle of authority in the abstract; for Christ, in being baptized by John, paid homage to the principle of discipline and subordination, and at a later period of his career said, "render to Cæsar that which is Cæsar's."

It is not necessary to prolong the catalogue of those points of departure at which Khaled, the oftener he read, felt disposed to leave the beaten track of his fathers for a land that promised so much. Above all, the panorama of Christ's character, from the resistance to the devil's temptation of all the fair kingdoms of the world, down to the denunciation of lust in

the heart, as being equivalent to lust in deed, led him captive. "It is not alone my understanding," said Khaled to himself, "that is convinced, it is an inexplicable and irresistible sympathy, an exalting and purifying love and reverence that carries me upward and onward."

But on the other hand, father, kindred, nation, and, above all, the sureties, the *awful ten*, seemed to his affrighted and susceptible imagination to rise up the puissant princes of the realms of terror. He was in truth appalled at the gulf that was daily yawning between himself and his cherished associates. His internal wrestlings sometimes carried him to the borders of frenzy, and he asked himself if the whole was not a dream; and at other times, if the fair form that had taken possession of his senses, was not the carnal dwelling of an evil spirit; and then a reaction would take place, and his conscience would smite him as he remembered the words of Matthew: "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name sake; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." "He that loveth father or mother more than

me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

Such were his struggles during the absence of Melusina in Aleppo: and her next visit to Taraf-el-Gharb was made, not with Signor Guiseppe Moro, but with his elder brother, Signor Giovanni Moro, ex-Venetian consul of Cairo, who had come to Aleppo to wind up some affairs with his brother, and in order to recruit his health, which had been shattered with the heat of Cairo; and it was agreed between the brothers that he should take Melusina to Taraf for a few weeks, on his way to Egypt, and that Signor Guiseppe Moro should rejoin them before his departure, and return with Melusina to Aleppo.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARMENIAN VILLAGE.

The ruined castle (conspicuous in the history of the Assassins, under the name of Kalat-el-Gharb) which overhung the native vale of Khaled, is based on a precipitous rock, and the entrance on the other side is by a narrow mound, overgrown with lofty trees, communicating with the hill behind. Some cultivated fields fill up an irregular amphitheatre on each side of the precipice on which the castle is built, and at the extremity of the northern basin is a village, nestled in walnut trees, inhabited by Armenians, while close on the border of the southern basin is the Nosairi village, of which young Khaled's father was the sheikh.

One day, shortly after the hour of noon, he

was in a musing mood, seated in the ruins of the castle, when a tinkling of bells became audible, but not that of goats, and looking down to the level of the plain, where a rough horse-road wound round the foot of the castle rock, three mules and two horses successively appeared, taking the road to the Armenian village. On the first was baggage with an Armenian servant, wearing a black turban, mounted astride. On the second was a maid-servant, wearing a common Aleppine costume; then astride on a white pony, came a young lady, who was followed by an elderly gentleman in the Oriental costume, whose head was surmounted by a somewhat shabby cocked-hat instead of a turban, and who rode a high chestnut Turcoman horse; while, last of all, on a mule loaded with baggage, was a janizary with scarlet costume, who occasionally applied to the over-loaded mule a long stick tipped with silver.

Khaled trembled with pleasure as he recognised the cavalcade.

"Let me see," said he to himself, looking up to the sky as he estimated the time of day;

"my father will not return from Ain-el-Furragh until within an hour of sunset. This will give me ample time to make all arrangements."

On this he returned to his village, and waiting till the afternoon was advanced, set about making his toilette; but as the total revenue of the valley might, in years of an abundant harvest, amount to a bill of a London perfumer, the reader may well suppose that the process was not a very expensive one. Taking a rounded ball of Cretan soap and a towel, he went to the brook, and having cleansed himself, returned to his house, and putting on new yellow slippers, told an urchin to saddle his horse, and then rode along to the Armenian village.

The houses of the village were all straggling among small gardens, not one of them was more than one story high, and in front of the best of them was a lofty walnut, under which was placed a couple of small Bagdad carpets and a cushion, where the elderly gentleman was reclining and smoking a long pipe, a little cloth skull cap having replaced the cocked-hat. A very old Armenian, in his black turban, sat on

a stone at the door of the house, and at some little distance the servants were making a meal of the remains of a repast of which the travellers had just partaken.

"It is now seven years, Signor Moro, since I left Aleppo and returned to my native village."

"Seven years! not possible," said Signor Moro. "I remember my brother advising me of it: how time flies! it seems as if it were yesterday."

"And exactly fifty-two years next Michaelmas, since I entered the house of your respected father."

"And a faithful servant you have been to our house. May you live fifty-two more!"

"Wish me the units without the tens," said the old man, shaking his head. "I can never hope to see the city of Aleppo again."

"And no loss to you, I assure you, my good Vedgeghim. Aleppo is the mere ashes of its former self."

"No doubt," said the Armenian, "these wars and battles on the high seas have sadly crippled trade."

"Killed it outright, my worthy friend. I wonder what the old Venetian consuls, buried in your Armenian church, would say, if they revisited our colony now. Aleppo is fairly done for. Our few Venetian families become mere impoverished Arabs, with Venetian names, and as for the republic at home, we have seen how the Gallic cock offered to fraternise with the lion of St. Mark, and how the poor lion met the fate of all that had undergone the same friendly embrace."

"And what news from Europe?" said the Armenian: "will Bonaparte conquer Germany as well as Italy?"

"Heaven knows I should scarcely be sorry; fair play is a jewel. Our Lion was killed yesterday, and the Imperial eagle has its turn to-day."

"And when comes the turn of the Gallic cock to have its neck twisted?"

"That is another affair," said Signor Moro; "but come it must. As for Bonaparte, he has no patience to wait a general's pension, and a quiet villa in old age. Mark well my words:

A cannon-ball, the guillotine, or a prison lie between him and a snug old age: and you need not envy Bonaparte, or any man alive, my worthy Vedgeghim," continued Moro, throwing aside his pipe, and yawning with outstretched arms, "for this is a perfect paradise of waving woods, running waters, and singing birds."

"I am only afraid," said the Armenian, turning to Melusina, who now came out of the house with his aged wife, "that the wretched accommodation of our poor house is a sad contrast to the marble floors and gay divans of the house of the Moros in Aleppo."

"Not a word against my dear Taraf-el-Gharb," said the young lady. "Have I not, for months, seen nothing but our court-yard walls; or at the most, enjoyed from the house-top, a little fresh air, from which the dome of the Adelieh seems pretty enough; but then that eternal muezzin, from the minaret of the Bahrameey, with his doleful notes, puts me in a fret when I think of the music of the woods. Rest assured, your Armenian cottage is a palace to me, with my charming old garden at the

back, and the snatch of sea view in front. Oh, I adore this place!" she said.

"But a strange set of people these Nosairis must be," said Moro; on which the old Armenians gave each other a slight reciprocal glance of intelligence, for they had suspected, during the previous summer, from various circumstances, that there existed a mystery in relation to the young lady, which they had been unable to penetrate.

"A strange set, indeed, they are," said the wife of the Armenian; "their women are bought and sold, like cattle. Sometimes, a man, scant of cash, buys his wife with a cow; and if she turns out contrary to expectation, he returns her to the original owner, and insists on getting back his cow again, which is a much more difficult matter to accomplish, than the getting of the bride in the first instance, for they think no more of cutting each other's throats, than I think of twisting the neck of a pullet."

On this, Melusina looked pensively on the ground, and on the old Armenian stealing

a glance at her, she turned away her head, and seemed disposed, first, to re-enter the cottage, but checked herself, lest she should seem to have some motive for avoiding the current of conversation.

"So," said Moro, "a marriage is often followed, not by births, but by deaths; but that is rather an alarming account of affairs for us travellers. Is there any danger to strangers residing here?"

"Not a whit," said the Armenian; "Mount Cassius is as safe as Venice."

"Or safer still, mayhap," said Moro, "in these days of French democracy."

"It is all among themselves; they fight and cut each other's throats like savages, and the only sign of their not being downright heathens is, that they keep the Christian feasts of Christmas, New Year, and the Epiphany. Oh! and something else I forgot, they have Insurance Companies, too," said the Armenian, laughing.

"Well, that looks like a little civilization," said Moro;—"in trade do you mean?"

"Not a bit," said the Armenian: "they insure the ransom of blood,—that is to say, that when a man, who has killed another, has to pay a sum to the relations of the deceased, it does not ruin him, but, by an average, falls on the subscribers."

"Well, that is droll," said Moro. "I have heard of honour among thieves, but never before of prudence among murderers. Can you say nothing more in their favour? Is that their only art and science?"

"No," said the Armenian, "they coin money which circulates in the mountain," and, going into the cottage, brought out a piaster, on which was legible, "Struck at Ain-el-Croon."

"Upon my word," said Moro. "After murder, illegal coinage is certainly a rise in the scale of morality."

Melusina, during this conversation, made no remark, but pensively looked to the ground; and the wife of the Armenian, thinking that she perceived in her air a disguised uneasiness at the turn the conversation was taking, said,

briskly, "For all that, they have their good points; they are exceedingly generous and hospitable, and kind to the poor."

On this, the countenance of Melusina brightened up into something like an unconscious smile, which the old Armenian woman did not fail to perceive; and, taking Melusina into the garden, gave her, to her palpable relief, a chronological, topographical, and personal account of the events, of which Taraf-el-Gharb had been the theatre during her absence; the births, marriages, and deaths; and in default of incidents of a more moving character, including the quadrupeds within the sphere of her memoirs, until household duties calling her Armenian hostess to the kitchen, larder, and store-room, Melusina retired to her apartment.

Signor Moro had again sunk into his nap under the tree, and woke up, as Khaled pranced up and alighted.

"Ho! Hamood, water to wash, and a cup of coffee!" cried Signor Moro, yawning. "Who is this gay cavalier?"

"That is Khaled, the son of the Sheikh of the other village," said the Armenian.

"And what does he want?" said Moro.

"To salute you," said the Armenian.

"Salute the devil!" said Moro; "he will be asking me, I fancy, to write to my brother to speak to an effendi of Aleppo, to speak to the kiahya, who must speak to the pasha, who will then write to the Bey of Lattakia Two hundred piasters of trouble to save him fifty of Miri. Just like the rest, I fancy. Ho! Hamood, bring the water-pipe, and see that the Timback is well-damped. D'ye hear?"

"No! quite the reverse," said the Armenian, "he is modest, and what is much better, he always speaks the truth, but whether from stupidity, or goodness of heart, I know not; for he is so shy and reserved, there is no making him out."

The young man dismounted, and telling a rough looking peasant to walk his horse under a walnut-tree, a little way off; he approached Signor Moro, but embarrassment was unmis-

takably visible, as he welcomed the Venetian to Taraf-el-Gharb, and, being motioned to the stone bench, he seated himself, and awaited from Signor Moro a renewal of the conversation. But Moro, having ordered coffee for the young man, and asked him three or four times how he was, found it more pleasant to draw out the water-pipe than to draw out the young Sheikh; the conversation dropped, and, in a few minutes, Signor Moro, being of a corpulent habit, and not much used to the fatigues of travel, slumbered again.

The servants and the Armenian had dispersed, and the young Sheikh, cautiously looking round, at length fixed his eye on the window of the room which Melusina occupied. He attempted to make out from the disposition of the shutters, whether she was conscious of his presence; but as he gazed she suddenly appeared, and, without taking notice of him, first reconnoitered the territory. Khaled no sooner saw her than, satisfying himself that no one was a spectator, and seeing Moro sound asleep, passed the window, about to call for his horse,

but was unable to resist the temptation of lingering for a moment.

"Can we meet at midnight in the castle?" he whispered as he passed.

"Yes," said she, somewhat impatiently, "but do not stand here to compromise me."

On this he proceeded to the road, and, calling for his horse, mounted it and rode off; and when Signor Moro awoke again, the Armenian, who was seated on the stone, rose and said to him, "Signor Moro, I have something of the most serious import to communicate to you."

"Serious," said Moro, "what is it?"

"Before I tell you," said the Armenian, "let us saunter down the road as far as the fountain, our conversation here might be interrupted."

"What is all this?" said Moro, rising and leading the way out of the village.

To this the Armenian returned no answer, until they arrived at a part of the road clear of all the houses, when the Armenian said,

"Signor Moro, before I open my lips on this matter, you must first of all promise me that you will take no violent resolution—restrain all

anger, and wait twenty-four hours before you act on the information I give you."

"What is all this? what is all this?" said Moro.

"It concerns Signora Melusina," said the Armenian, "but I will not open my lips on the subject unless you promise me not to say a word of it to her, until the lapse of twenty-four hours enable you to act with perfect coolness and calmness."

"Well! well! then," said Moro, "I promise you. What is it? out with it at once."

"My wife and I," said the Armenian, "suspected last year, some love affair between your niece and the young Sheikh, who called upon you to-day, and there is now no doubt of it."

"I hope to God," said Moro, with stern hauteur, "that you may be altogether mistaken."

"I hope so, too," said the Armenian, "but my wife assures me positively, that her countenance rose and fell like a thermometer, while we were conversing on the Nozairis, and that while you were asleep, they had a few words

at the window, and promised to meet at the castle to night, which shows a previous intercourse, and fully explains a variety of circumstances which had excited suspicion."

"The presumptuous scoundrel!" said Moro, stopping short as he got into a violent passion, even his ears becoming crimson with excitement—"there is only one way to settle that matter, and that is by shooting the scoundrel. Come, let us turn back directly for my pistols."

"Stop!" said the Armenian, "you remember your promise."

"Too hastily given," said Moro; "let us return to the house directly."

"What!" said the Armenian, "do you neither respect your own promise, nor my grey hairs! If the old Sheikh were to lose his son, a tigress deprived of her young would be gentleness itself compared with him—these people are capable of sacking the whole village, and massacring us all from the grey-bearded cripple, to the sucking infant."

"Here is a pretty business!" said Moro, with profound mortification. "I came to this charm-

ing place to enjoy myself, and forget the cares of the world, for a time at least, and annoyance meets me the day of my arrival."

"But here we are at the fountain," said the Armenian, "taste our water and tell me what you think of it." The presence of several people at the well, which was the principal point of attraction for the villagers after work-hours, suspended the conversation; and, the shades of evening falling, they returned home.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

It may well be believed that Khaled was on the thorns of impatience, so slowly moved the hours and minutes, that it almost appeared as if on that particular afternoon the horses of the car of Phœbus had altered their brisk trot for a walking pace. Easterns never pace an apartment, but on this occasion no sooner had a villager, who came to talk to him about any small matter, been dismissed, than he walked anxiously up and down, and from time to time pulled out from behind his girdle a watch, almost as large as the palm of his hand, and nearly as thick as an egg, which he consulted with the utmost anxiety.

The sun at length set, and the old sheikh

returned, Khaled having descended to the threshold, and, as he dismounted, kissed his hand.

"How have you on your gala clothes?" said his father.

"The Consular Bey has come to the Upper Taraf, and I went to salute him in your name."

"And why in such a hurry?" said the old man; "has Hamza come back from the mill?"

"I think so," said Khaled.

"You think and don't know?" said the old man inquiringly. "Were you at the Mulberry-hut this afternoon?"

"No," said Khaled.

"Dreaming, as usual," said the old man; "well, if you are a bad husbandman, you are a good Nosairi, and have credit with our sheikhs for having a stout heart and a strong arm. A commission is about to devolve on you, which will require all your courage; so you must get your things ready for a long journey."

"A long journey?" said Khaled, evidently taken a-back.

"Yes," said the old man, impatiently; "do not repeat my words, but do what you are bidden."

"Upon my head," said the young man, in token of obedience, putting his hand upon the top of his turban.

"You will ride the brown mare to Lattakia, where Sheikh Saim will find you a vessel for either Rosetta, Damietta, or Alexandria. Here are the names of our nation in these places," continued the old sheikh, taking out of his breast a greasy black book, in which was a piece of paper with the names written in it, "and they, in their turn, will put you in the way of conveyance to Cairo. On your journey and voyage, throw away your head if you choose, but never throw away an indiscreet word, nor even a quarter of a word, for it may produce a resonance in the minds of the enemies of our nation, which may help them to the other three quarters. Thus is the business of the nation to be marred. When you arrive at Cairo, ask for Sheikh Abd-el-Aziz, on the Halidge, near Bab-el-Hark; and here my in-

structions stop. Do what you are bidden; and be in his hands a machine, with eyes to see, ears to hear, feet to walk, and hands to strike; but have no will but his will. Thus will his single will have double ears, eyes, feet, and hands, apart from those wherein his will has its dwelling; thus is the business of our nation to be done; and remember that all is dust in the balance, compared with the furthering of the business of our nation. Take leave of your mother, as if going to Lattakia; not a word of Egypt and a lengthened absence."

A flood of tears was the answer of the youth to his parent, and Khaled passed the evening in his preparations for the morrow, and in serving his father during the evening meal, who, about to part with his son for a period, changed his habitual gruffness into kindness,—consoled his mother for his prospective absence, and where the minutes before sunset seemed hours, the hours after sunset flew like minutes, —such a material bustle and confusion of ideas had this project of a distant journey produced on him. His last orders were to have his horse

ready by the cockcrow, and it was eleven o'clock before the family retired to rest; every human being and quadruped in the village having been asleep an hour before.

His father slept with the Hareem in the lower apartment, but Khaled occupied the strange apartment above, which we have already described, and waiting for another half hour, he quietly descended the steps, crossed a narrow paved court on tiptoe, drew back a large wooden bolt of a door leading to the mulberry garden behind, and passing through it, looked across a broad open space that intervened between it and the wood, but as the moon was bright, he thought it prudent to see that all was clear before he leaped the wall. He seemed to hear a rustling of leaves behind, but listening again, he supposed it to be a movement of the tethered ass in the neighbouring paddock; he then got quietly over the wall, walked rapidly across the steep open space, and entering the wood, walked to the mound that led to the castle; so that shortly before midnight, he descended the dry fosse

overgrown with shrubs, and after a few yards of steep ascent, entered the great portal of the castle.

A drawbridge had formerly spanned this interval, but, for a couple of centuries at least, the castle had been abandoned, in consequence of an explosion of its powder magazine. Two massive square towers, showing even in the moonlight alternate layers of black and light-coloured stone, indicated an Eastern taste in castle building; but above the gate was a shield, on which might be seen by daylight three rams' heads on a field of Or, the arms of the Count Perignac de la Rochebrune—one of the first crusaders who encamped under the walls of Antioch, and whose descendants held this castle above a half century. A bold irregular line of towers and battlements encircled the rock, except where the explosion had blown huge and still firmly adhering masses of prodigiously thick wall into the moat below; and within this ring of battlements was a roofless square edifice, the interior of which formed a court or cloister, with a multitude of slender

little twisted columns, clearly showing that here a monastery of the Lower Empire must have existed before the castle was built, for at one end of it was a small Greek basilica of a very remote period.

Khaled paced the pavement of the cloister which was incumbered with fragments of masonry, until at length a female form appeared, and, advancing, he took both the hands of Melusina in his own. The lovers, after a long absence, now met in those very sequestered precincts, where they had first pledged their vows — the air calm without heat, clear without chill, was all that could be desired by the votaries of a romantic love — even the vestal radiance of the moon smiled wooingly on the scene, and a silver Nile cloud rather adorned than obscured the perspicuity of the heavens. They forthwith commenced cooing, like turtle doves, but the faithful narrator does not deem it necessary to relate the whole of the conversation ; for love-making, although the most poetical part of real life, is generally the

most prosy part of romantic biography, and love being somewhat too indulgent a critic for the general reader, estimates rather the beloved speaker than the abstract value of the spoken.

"Oh, Khaled! Khaled!" said Melusina, "what a fright you gave me to-day, by speaking at the window. You must never risk such a thing again."

"Well, I will not," said Khaled, "but the sight of you, after such an absence, made my head turn, and I forgot myself; but nobody saw or heard a word. Need I tell you, that not a day has elapsed since your departure, in which your sweet image has not been present to my mind. You remember the wide-spreading tree, where we first looked at each other, and felt that each had found the mystery of sympathy. As its leaves in autumn faded and fell, my mind became a prey to doubt and melancholy; but soon the spring came, and each tender leaf that budded was a time-keeper that seemed to quicken your return. Oh! think me not a fool that such

small matters occupied me. Your departure left a gap, and I filled it with a dream of my own; but I suppose," continued he, taking familiarly hold of her ear, "that in Aleppo you had a thousand amusements to make you forget your poor Khaled."

"Come," said she, sportively repelling his arm, "you are fishing for a compliment, and a declaration of my love. Well, I will disappoint you — shall I? No! poor Khaled! the truth is best after all. I abhor Aleppo with its endless gossiping and dull tittle-tattle, and as I saw the bare peak of Cassius from a turn in the road, my heart bounded with delight! Now, there is for you! What more can I say?"

"Generous maid," said Khaled, "to think of me who am a mere barbarian!"

"But who yet has managed to make a Frank lady forget all the saloons of Aleppo, and look forward to be his wedded wife."

"Can I ever," said Khaled, tenderly taking her hand, "forget your resolution, the inconvenience in which I involve you with your own

people, and even, perhaps, the danger you run from vindictive relatives."

"Inconvenience there certainly must be," said Melusina, "but danger there is none in my case; and even if there were, have I not love enough in me to make me brave both danger and difficulty? And you," continued she, "what would happen to you if your nation knew about the volume I have procured you?"

"Good soul! do not ask me," said Khaled. "What should you say — nay, do not be alarmed, for I am cautious enough — what should you say, if my body were to be hacked into as many fragments as that shattered roof which lies on the ground?"

The church had in dead stillness re-echoed these words, but scarce had Khaled spoken, when a sound, as of a step near where they sat, caused both to rise in some apprehension of a stranger, but no human form appeared, and a large owl flying out of a resting place, fluttered about the basilica, and making a circle round the heads of the lovers, settled on a perch in the darker part of the moonlit court,

its eyes gleaming in the distant gloom. The footstep was that of the father of Khaled, silently and secretly mounting, bare-foot, the narrow turnpike stair behind the altar, to an opening near the partly shattered dome, from which he listened to all that passed with the true secretiveness of his nation, which does not stickle at the unhandsome, even when standing on the strong ground of justifiable authority: for he had no sooner, at the approach of midnight, by accident, seen Khaled leap the garden wall, than suspecting some sinister purpose, he determined to fathom the mystery.

"Be tranquil," said Khaled, "you see it is only that bird which will tell no tales, even if it understood every word we said. Nine months ago I should have reckoned this an evil omen, but that book which you gave me has cast a new light upon all things."

"Thunder rive and earthquake swallow the impious swine!" muttered the old Sheikh to himself, as shuddering he made a violent effort to contain a burst of frenzied anger, and succeeded in this only by the force of long ex-

ercised habits of self-control and dissimulation, which the profession of a secret religion necessarily teaches under a great variety of circumstances. "Oh! Ali-el-Ala," continued he, that ever I should have begotten such a son as this!"

"And tell me," said Melusina, "have you continued to read, with pleasure and profit, the book I gave you?"

"Indeed I have," said Khaled, "in the nooks of the hills, far from the presence of men, I have read and pondered, long doubted, and then firmly believed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

"Out upon thee! — out upon thee! — out upon thee!" said the old Sheikh to himself in shuddering whispers, while a transport of fury and astonishment traversed his darkened soul. "Oh, Khaled, Khaled, I have done with thee! — I have done with thee! Oh, heaven and earth! where were your fires to blind his eyes, and thunder-claps to crack his ear-drums, rather than let it come to this? Oh God! my reason wanders."

"Khaled, beware," said Melusina, "do not incline to the religion of the cross, if it recommends itself only through my persuasions. Love or hate of the adviser has much to do with the reception of the advices of this world. What would you have said of the Gospels, if given you by your bitterest foe?"

"There is nothing," said Khaled, "in the whole world like the naked truth, I should say. Allah has given me the understanding mind, and these are the words of truth; Jesus died on the cross to testify to the truth, and the Testament of Jesus is the only true gospel."

"I have no son," said the Sheikh to himself, in pensive bitterness; "the Khaled, I knew, is gone — lost to me — dead! — dead! — dead! Oh, Ali-el-Ala, hear my prayers!"

"But, Oh!" said Khaled to Melusina, straits, terrors, and difficulties beset me at every step. I have a father and mother" — here he wept — "whom I tenderly love. For the temporal interests of the Nosairi nation, I am ready to lay down life itself. Nation,

family — these are also religions in which the heart has the better of the head."

"My prayer is heard," said the old man to himself; "the lamp still glimmers."

"And what prospect," said Melusina, "is there of an accomplishment of our vows—how are these difficulties to be got over?"

"God will provide," said Khaled; "at present all is dark, to-morrow will see me depart from hence on business that must be dispatched; but until my return you will ever remain present to my mind."

"To-morrow!" said Melusina, starting: "Where do you go?"

"Sweet girl! ask me neither where, nor how long, nor on what business I go; circumstances, over which I have no control, call me away; but here in this Christian temple I solemnly vow, to be at your call—your wedded bridegroom; but as yet I do not see my way clearly."

"I can wait—I can wait," said Melusina. "I am yours when you will, and confide in you more easily than I confide in myself;

and in good time we may find the road before us a broad and a straight one; so now good night! I can easily find my way to the foot-path—every soul in our village is asleep; so take no heed of me. Adieu!"

Khaled then led her across the court-yard, and she wended her way down the dark shady path to the back of her garden; but on his return half-way back to the mound, he heard the gruff well-known voice of his father, sitting at the edge of the moat, pronounce his name.

"Where are you going?" said the father.

"To our own house," said Khaled.

"To hell," said his father, "as fast as you can go!"

Khaled remained perfectly silent.

"If your body," continued the Sheikh, "was hacked in a thousand pieces, and the remains thrown to the vultures, you would be treated better than your deserts. There is a purse—let not the rising sun find you in Taraf-el-Gharb; go to the land of Egypt, and remember that you never see the face, or hear the voice of me or mine until your mind be purified;—as for me

I must moan in secret until I hear far different accounts of you than my ears have heard to-night."

With these words he threw a leathern purse on the ground, which Khaled picked up ; and then advancing, would have taken the old man's hand to kiss, but the father hastily withdrew it, and pointing sternly to the village, added the simple monosyllable, "Go!" and giving way to a burst of grief, buried his face in his hands.

Khaled, overwhelmed with grief and confusion, silently took the road home ; and, unable to repose, called his man ; and his saddle-bags being ready packed, he took a hasty and painful adieu of his mother, and mounted his horse. The moon shone on his way—the sun rose in the east, and Cassius was left behind ; but Khaled was unconscious of land or sea, and answered mechanically to the observations of his man ; who, full of animal spirits, carolled away song after song ; and, disappointed that even his most flattering observations failed to procure notice, began secretly to wonder what he could have said or done to offend him ; and

at last, having concluded that the displeasure arose from the favourite brown mare not having been sufficiently curried, his formal apology and excuse for the supposed cause of Khaled's moroseness, was the first circumstance that recalled him to the realities of his journey. The morning advancing, the sun began to be oppressive, and they entered a khan with a veranda of dried leaves, within a couple of hours of Lattakia. Here breakfast was brought in in the shape of flat cakes of bread, delicious grapes, good cheese presented on vine leaves, and coffee without sugar or milk. But Khaled had as little appetite for material food as for the whimsical humours of his man; and the westerly sea-breeze getting up about ten o'clock, they remounted, and by mid-day arrived at Lattakia; and on the same evening a vessel offering for Jaffa, he embarked for that port, whence there are daily departures for Damietta; but having suffered so severely in his first sea-voyage, and learning at Jaffa that by proceeding to Gaza he could easily fall in with a caravan for Cairo, he preferred crossing the desert to taking another sea-voyage.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE ON THE KHALIDGE.

A DEEP narrow canal, withdrawn from the Nile and bordered by high houses, makes a semicircular course through the heart of the city, and returns again to the Nile. In some places a narrow quay intervenes between the houses and the water; but in most places, as in the Venetian canals, the lattices of the houses overlook the water. During the high inundation, that is to say, in August, September, and October, instead of the stagnant saline green of the Venetian canal, the swollen waters of the Halidge of Cairo, reaching from house-wall to house-wall, rush through with a roaring, turbid rapidity; but in spring and early summer, when the Nile is low, the Halidge is a damp,

gloomy, loathsome ditch, and the houses that border it subject to fever.

In a small narrow house near Bab-el-Hark, was a lattice, at which sat an old man about an hour before sunset, on the day that Khaled was let out of prison ;—from his bulk and stature he must have been a giant half a generation before ; majesty sat on his boldly chiselled features ; but his sunken cheeks, fringed by a milk white beard, and his curved back, denoted extreme old age. Such was Abd-el-Aziz-el-Gebely, the Old Man of the Mountain resident in Cairo, to whom Khaled was recommended by his father ; for he did not think it necessary, even after the scene in the castle, to alter the disposition for his son's departure, and this for various reasons,—first, because he was ignorant of the precise service for which Khaled was designed, it being sufficient to him that it was on the business of the nation ; and secondly, it was his wish that Khaled should be removed from a connexion which the father believed to be more human than religious ; and that when once engaged in the business of the

nation, his love would pass away, and with it the strange doctrines insinuated by so fair an apostle; and as he could have no comfort in his domestic interior as long as Khaled remained in a temper of mind such as he avowed to the girl he loved, his absence in another country seemed to afford the best issue from a complication so shocking to the old man's feelings.

The room in which Abd-el-Aziz sat was shabby; an old brown mat covered the floor, in one corner of which was some rolled-up bedding, while the projecting window that hung over the canal, showed symptoms of rottenness from gnawing humidity, that made one doubt if the seat which commanded a view up and down the Halidge, was a safe one. There, however, he had sat almost every day for above half a century at the same hour. He filled a long pipe, without a mouth-piece, with tobacco, while his one-eyed great-grand-daughter prepared his dinner; which, before sunset, was served on a little round stool, covered with a tray, and consisted only of a dish of vegetables and some butter, with a flat cake and a pitcher

of water, kept cool by being of porous potters' earth.

When he had ended, and washed his hands, the one eyed great-grand-daughter retired into the other apartment to dine alone.—And just after sunset a knock was heard at the street-door,—to which the grand-daughter answered in a shrill voice, with the question—"Who is it?" And on a rude masculine voice answering, "Mahmood," the door was opened, and a man stone-blind, but decently dressed, with a clean white turban, and a long stick in his right hand, and a pipe in his left, groped his way up the staircase and passages, and entering the rooms saluted the old man as if he had a perfect vision, slipped off his shoes at the door and, advancing, sat down beside the patriarch at the window, where they exchanged salutations.

"This is an accursed summer," said Mahmood; "this is the first cool day we have had, and I shall have some sleep at last, for I have had very little these three months with this excessive heat."

"As for me," said the old man, with a sigh,

"I doubt my remaining long in a human form, and imagine that my soul must be transmigrated according to the will of the Most High Ali. I, Mahmood, have had enough of this shape. In youth a giant in health and strength, but now years press heavily on me, and I seek to rest—my offspring being all dead except that poor girl, but the condition of the rest of the people of Ali does not satisfy me,—the wealthiest member of our nation an apostate, and although the taking of his blood be lawful, none of our young men with the courage to strike the blow, and Salih more intent on getting his wealth than on vindicating the purity of our faith and the great principle of holding the nation together."

At this moment a loud knock was heard at the door, and the piping treble of the granddaughter cried *Men*—Who?—at the little carved bole opening on the street, when a strange voice was heard to ask—if this was the house of Abd-el-Aziz-el-Gebely. Being answered affirmatively, the new-comer gave his name as Khaled-ebn-Zobar, on which the door was opened, and Khaled being shown up stairs en-

tered and, saluting Abd-el-Aziz the Old Man of the Mountain, was warmly received by him and seated beside him; then casting a look to the blind man, convinced himself that he was so, and to satisfy himself that the individual he was really addressing was the Patriarch, took hold, as if carelessly, of the lobe of his left ear, and the signal being answered by the old man arranging his turban—Khaled took off his own turban, and pulling out an inner red fez, cut a letter sewed by a few stitches to the interior of the crown, and presented it to the old man, which he read, and which was simply couched as follows:—

(After compliments), "This is our son Khaled, whom we recommend to you with our greeting, as fit to be employed on any service you may choose. In various encounters he has shown his courage and fearlessness of death,—and has received our orders to give implicit obedience to whatever instructions you may give him.

"The tobacco this year has not been so good or so plentiful in quantity as in other years; but to preserve in evenness the scale of destiny,

we have only felt the tail of the earthquake, the body of which fell so severely on other parts of the coast, so that not a single house has received even a crack.

"We all salute you, and may God veil you with the Graceful Veil.

(Signed),

"Youssouf of the Beni Zobar."

"All honour to him and to thee," said the old man, "we are both of the faithful, and that is our brother and friend Mahmood."

"Marhaba!—salutations to you," said the blind man, "and welcome to the land of Egypt. We often wondered if the faithful in the mountain remembered us, but thanks to the High Ali thou hast come, and his business shall be forwarded."

"In the mean time," said the old man, "as you are come off a journey you must be hungry and thirsty. Coffee, oh, girl, and a chibouque: and now what will you eat—an omelet and a kabab and parsley from the cook-shop?"

"No," said Khaled, "I am neither hungry

nor thirsty, having eaten with an acquaintance I met on my arrival."

"And pray tell me," said the old man, "how is your father? I recollect him well fifty years ago— a handsome man, and with as firm a seat in his saddle, as a bold and sure a hand at the djereed; but time spares neither mountaineer nor citizen."

"You have spoken the truth," said Khaled, "my father is on the downward road, but he enjoys good health, and our mountain air and water conduce to longevity."

"Talk of the air as you choose," said the old man; "but say nothing against the Nile water; talking of it puts me in mind of drinking it."

So going to a crevice or niche cut out in the wall, in which were drinking utensils, a place just like the almeries of our old English conventual architecture, he took a long pull at one of the porous water jars, and sitting down again, the one-eyed grand-daughter now entered with a pipe for Khaled.

"And how go the politics of the mountain?"

said the old man: "we have repeatedly heard of your daring bravery."

"Just as usual," said Khaled, embarrassed; "I did my duty to my own nation. Selim Bey of Lattakia came with such a swarm of Kurds, Arnaouts, and other cut-throats, that all the villages were in an uproar; so we had no resource but to rise, and the Bey being well beaten, and unable to send fresh funds to Tripoli, he was forthwith overhauled by the Pasha at the advice of his Saraf, with whom he was dreadfully in arrear, and on whose standing at the Porte he entirely depended, so an accommodation took place, the obnoxious impost was taken off; but what we gained with our blood on the hill side we lost with our intestine divisions. The old jealousy between Sheikh Hamid and Sheikh Hussein broke out, and the end of the matter is, that they betrayed each other, and are now in prison at Tripoli."

"Deplorable," said the old man, "but while you in the mountain are so careless of concord in political matters, and know nothing of discord on those matters most interesting to the hearts

of the faithful, we have here in Cairo a case of abandonment of the interests of our co-religionists that demands a treatment as well devised in plan as prompt and bold in execution. A hundred thousand souls dwell between the four seas of the world, and yet, although the true faith of Ali-el-Ala be possessed by so few, one has been found so deluded as to subtract not only himself but his progeny from our communion, and you are come at the right time to serve the faithful. His goods have been directed from his true brethren like a river turned aside into the desert, and away from its natural channel, and now the hour of vengeance is at hand. A curse on all apostates, and their sons, and their sons' sons."

"A curse on them," said the blind man, with his face contracted to a most repulsive expression, his white eyes, and fearful crimson eye-lids, partaking of his anger and fanaticism, as he swung his head twice as rapidly as before.

"We were in expectation," said the old man, "that if Ebn-Daoud, the apostate in question, had had no issue, his wealth, in the natural

course of things, would have gone to his relations, but the birth of a son, when least expected, and the prospect of his education in the faith of the Moslems, have made us come to a resolution that the punishment which is due must now fall on him. Not one of the faithful residents here could undertake anything against him without the certainty of detection, but with you the case is different.—You are an utter stranger in Cairo, and can execute whatever we plan without the fear of being discovered. This letter speaks of your fearlessness. You know not Cairo sufficiently well for that purpose as yet; but we will put you in the sure way of getting others to assist, who understand the business perfectly, and will do it surely; but in case they are subsequently caught—you, the link intervening between us and them, will be utterly awanting, for when you get back to the bald-pated mountain (Mount Cassius) they will vainly seek to get at us. As for those that do the deed—what befals infidel Moslems does not concern us."

"And tell me," said Khaled, "what were the circumstances of his apostasy."

"His father died when he was a stripling, and just a few weeks before he should have made his probation of fitness for receiving the mysteries of our faith. On his death-bed, his father said to me,—'You, Sheikh Abd-el-Aziz, will take my son into the desert, and there in solitude, removed from the hum of man, when the mind is like the clay in the hand of the potter, shall fashion it to receive, and never exude the elixir of truth.' But the wishes of the father were never fulfilled, and at his death the property got into the hands of the Cadi's court, and the son was weaned, alienated, and made to believe that his father was of a fabricated and untrue religion; his ears were poisoned against us, and he estranged himself from our small and faithful band; and all this through one Sheikh Saim, a cunning and plausible Moslem, and as fanatic as plausible, who, on account of his father's wealth, wished him to marry his daughter. But time will show that the apostasy is neither forgotten

nor forgiven, and that his substance belongs to the Nosairis."

"We have often," said Khaled, "heard the affair talked of in the mountain, and our elders have said that fifty years have nearly elapsed since a renegation of our faith took place."

"It is true," said the old man, "that was Hair-Allah-el-Salahieh, who got his quietus in the mosque of Omeia, in Damascus. He thought to silence our people, who threatened him for breaking off connection, by saying that he would denounce them to the Mufti. The same night after the prayer Eshia, he fell at the foot of a pillar with a knife stuck in his back."

"But was the man that did the deed not discovered?"

"No; the gates were ordered to be shut immediately, and all the worshippers examined, to see if they had blood-stained sleeves, or fingers, but no man was found in this predicament. He had pierced a double sheet of paper up to the hilt, which served as a sort of guard, and although every hand in the mosque, was examined,

not a drop of blood was found, and it was only known to the three who formed the committee of the faithful."

"And tell me," said Khaled, "how is the business to be done?"

"With an instrument, smooth as the razor of a barber. If you have a piece of ugly work to do you must have the dirk, the pistol, and the fearless arm of an Arnaout;—if a delicate piece of business, with fine cunning and little personal danger, a Gipsy is the man."

"And where are these men to be found; and are you sure they will undertake the job?"

"We know the men fit for the affair, but they know not us, and must not know us; and as for you, by the time any thing came out, you would be far enough distant from the banks of the Nile. Salih, our third committee man for this business, will give you full instructions and information; and, moreover, at the fitting time be your guide through the streets and localities of Cairo, with which you must be as yet unfamiliar."

"And who," said Khaled, "is the apostate that is to be struck?"

"Ebn-Daoud-Shah-Bandar-et-Tudgar," said the Old Man of the Mountain: "but you must be sleepy; take a sound night's rest, and to-morrow we will talk further of the affair."

So ended the conference, and at an early hour Khaled was shown to bed, by no means pleased with the commission about to devolve on him.

CHAPTER X.

SHEIKH CASSIM.

We must now return to Sheikh Cassim, who relieved Khaled from prison, and who is, in the course of this narrative, so frequently a spectator and actor in the events narrated, that it may be as well, before proceeding farther, to lay before the reader all that I have been able to collect respecting him, both from the large mass of documentary matter to which I got access and from the accounts given me of him by several aged persons still residing in Cairo, the principal of whom, I am proud to say, is my respected and venerable friend Sheikh Hussein-el-Mebergi, whose word is well known to all in Cairo to be his bond.

Sheikh Cassim was one of the most consider-

able merchants in Cairo, and a large importer of gums, ivory, ostrich feathers, and gold-dust. The reputation of wealth was at that time dangerous, but Cassim enjoyed, for many years previously, the protection of Morad Bey and Ibrahim Bey. The prodigality and hospitality of the former, contrasting with the more calculating avarice of the latter, his rival and partner in the Mameluke government of Egypt during the period that preceded the French invasion; and Morad Bey was often in pecuniary straits in spite of the frequent and glaring extortions of the system: and the ready resource of the loans and advances of Cassim, taught him that it would have been bad policy to kill the goose to get at the golden egg. Cassim being, moreover, a man of great benevolence, piety, and charity, and closely allied to the chief Ulema, he had a position which produced a certain awe of him in the minds of the Mamelukes,—as unprincipled an oligarchy as ever tyrannized over an unhappy country.

Sheikh Cassim's town-house was in the Mergoosh, which has neither the gloomy solitude

of the southern part of the city where the Turkish Grandees reside, nor the squalid bustle of the quarters of the poor. No attempt at regularity is in the least degree observable in the construction of the houses: some high, some low, some old ones, showing lintels and doorways covered with the greatest ingenuity, and all with wooden lattices symmetrically pierced with holes instead of windows. The street is about from twenty to twenty-five feet wide, which is a considerable breadth for a Cairo thoroughfare. At the top of the street going in the direction of the mountain, is a bazar for the sale of *boorks*, or veils, and other feminine paraphernalia; and at the other end, in the opposite direction, is the Bab-es-Shareey, a robust and ponderous gate, which in the days of the first Fatimite Caliphs, was the limit of the city in the direction of the Nile.

Here are no mercers and merchants, but the petty tradesmen of the neighbourhood. The baker, with his dark oven, which he aliments from time to time with straw; the grocer with his dates; the dairy-man with sleeves tucked up

to the elbow, handling jars of clarified butter and bowls of caimac-cream and curdled milk; the shop walls and counters lined with Damascus porcelain. There, too, is the attar, or druggist, who sells coffee; but, unlike the dairy-man, who laughs loud and talks slang and obscenity with the barber and butcher when they pass;—he is a quiet respectable-looking old man, with a green turban and a pair of spectacles which clasp on his nose, and he reads the Koran aloud in the street, bending his head like a man rowing a boat: habit and the clasped spectacles giving him a strong nasal twang.

Between these two bazars on the left side of the street, going up, is the mosque of the neighbourhood, the Giama-el-Ghamry, painted in alternate stripes of white and red, and having a hanging minaret like the Tower of Pisa, while attached to it are apartments where the ulema from the small towns of the district, to the east of the Delta of the Nile, alight. But a still more remarkable object than the hanging tower, is the black stone in the mosque, which

in many cases has proved highly conducive to connubial fertility.

Sheikh Cassim had only one wife, Sitt Wurdy, who had some remains of beauty. All her affections were concentrated on her son, who, about three months previous to the events we have narrated in the previous chapters, had just completed his fifth year, when it became necessary to think of sending him to school. Sitt Wurdy was for a *fackih* (pronounced fooky) or private tutor; but Sheikh Cassim decided for the master of a scholastic fountain not far from the Mergoosh, who was a protégé of Sheik Cassim, and frequently had asked when the boy would receive his ministrations. So one day the Sheikh took his son to the fountain of Abderrahman Kiahia, one of the last of those magnificent souls who covered Cairo with so many of those striking and curious monuments, which have rendered this city, for the quantity of excellent masonry, not only superior to every other city of the East, but possibly the most remarkable one in the world, with the exception of Venice.

A vast window, with a bronze grating bordered with tracery, so florid that it might be called an Oriental translation of Henry the Seventh's Chapel at Westminster, occupied a corner where two bazars forked off. Here a black pipe-bearing boy and a beggar in rags, without a turban and wearing only a coarse grey skull-cap, were quenching their thirst, while above, or, as we would say, on the first floor, was the loud noise of a school of boys —the Scholastic Fountain, erected by the charitable Abderrahman Kiahia — opening the fountains of knowledge to the youthful mind, quenching the thirst of material bodies with the water of the Nile, and adorning Cairo with an architectural monument, neither Greek, Roman, Moorish, nor Turkish, but of a style of its own — the *ne plus ultra* of quaint luxuriant phantasy.

Sheikh Cassim, accompanied by little Halil, went up a narrow staircase, panting and leisurely, for years and corpulence began to weigh heavily upon him, and piloted by the loud chorus of lesson-readers, he entered the prim-

ary school, a large apartment with lofty roof. Mats of various colours covered the ground, some new—bright and yellow some old, dark and brown, on which sat twenty or thirty boys, from six to ten years of age, all bowing in regular time, and reading some extracts from the Koran, or copying letters on wooden boards. The master and three or four monitors were at lunch when Sheikh Cassim entered, eating boiled lentiles, sprinkled with onions fried in fat, which diffused an odour through the apartment, that would have almost overpowered a European; but no sooner did the schoolmaster see Sheikh Cassim, than he suddenly rose, laid aside the dinner on the stool, and, quickly washing his hands, welcomed the new arrivals, and little Halil, half dead with terror at so many eyes directed to him, was installed as a pupil.

The master then called up one of his best pupils to read, as a specimen. He was about nine years of age, and first respectfully kissed the hand of Sheikh Cassim and the schoolmaster, then squatted himself cross-legged, and swinging his head began to read. The appro-

bation of Sheikh Cassim, and the gift of a few parahs, made the little fellow quite proud; and various other children, some with good eyes, some with sore eyes, some with one eye, some with no eye, and others with a slight cast, now crowded round, each anxious to display his reading. Thus they go on for years learning words, instead of knowing the meaning, until (as in Jacotot's system) some years afterwards the whole veil is suddenly rent, inscrutable Nature has been working mysteriously and independently of volition, and the meaning seems to burst upon them all at once.

When the lessons were finished, the master begged Sheikh Cassim to entail a Koran on the school, which was at once acceded to, and after another distribution of the smallest coin, Sheikh Cassim proceeded to the book-bazaar, not far distant, leading off the main line of bazaars, by a long narrow passage, across which was a bar of wood, breast high, to prevent horse, ass, or beast of burthen passing. Sheikh Cassim bent under it, and entered the book-bazaar; a dark narrow court, with the houses so high, that it looked

a well. In this were five book-stalls or shops.

"Yetfuddal! Sheikh Cassim," was heard from the stall on the left, as an invitation from a bookseller, who gave him a somewhat uproarious, affected welcome; but returning the salutation, he passed through, to the last bookstall at the bottom of the court, where a feeble old man was sitting in the utmost composure. The bookseller ordered coffee to be served to his customer, and on being asked for a Nushat, or copy of the Koran, he opened a carved chest at his side, and took out several copies, one of which Sheikh Cassim selected, after rubbing it on his forehead. and muttering a blessing. It was neatly written, but had no illumination except the heading and ending, in ultramarine and gold. "And what is the price of this?" said Sheikh Cassim, as he sipped the creamy brown froth off the coffee. "You honour me by accepting it as a present," said the bookseller, and he handed it to him again. This gift of course Sheikh Cassim received, on condition of making a present in cash equal to its value, which was about two

pounds sterling, which being paid, another Koran was entailed on the establishment of the charitable Abderrahman Kiahia.

The summer festivals and intervals were spent by little Halil at Boulak, with the utmost delight, where Sheikh Cassim had a suburban villa close to the Nile; a small garden adjoined it, in which grew a few trees peculiar to the climate, mostly palms. Some bananas, with their broad leaves, of a tropical character, and an unusually luxuriant orange-tree, with its rich dark foliage and fragrant white blossom, or speckled with the bright golden fruit according to the season, shading a broad movable wooden bench which, fitted up with cushions, was the spot where Sheikh Cassim in the cool of the evening smoked his pipe. Sometimes he preferred a room in the elevated part of the house, overlooking the river; for, in the intense heat of summer, when the hills of Mokattam send up the fierce reflection of an Egyptian sun, the cool evening air on the river, and the sight of the boats passing up and down, as seen from the open lattice, with the song of the boat-men,

joyous and plaintive, wafted across the waters as the last splendours of the western sun crimsoned the opposite peaks of the Pyramids — the pipe of fragrant Lattakia tobacco filled, not by an indifferent menial, but by the hands of his wife, whose ambition, however strange it may seem to a European lady, lay in being his hand-maid — the repose from the care and exertion of the day, and the incipient prattle of young Halil,—all formed the happiest moments of Sheikh Cassim, and made him forego the reception of friends in the evening; for company in the Cairo dog-days requires a tension of the nerves, to which listless repose affords an agreeable contrast.

His feelings, as a Moslem, were intense; and, as years rolled on, his religious sentiments had become stronger. His life was certainly blameless, and he watched every scintillation of intelligence and virtue in his son, which might be fanned into ardour for the religion of Mohammed. His wife listened uninterruptedly to his allocutions; and if she proffered no difference of opinion, it no doubt arose from her percep-

tions of politics and theology being somewhat dim. Sheikh Cassim used to think aloud in the presence of his wife and son; and if they could not comprehend, they listened uninterruptedly.

"Whence," he would say, "are the wealth and grandeur of the Mamelukes, but from the scourgings and oppression of the poor, and in which of them can we find that spirit which led Amer-Ebn-el-As to the shores of the Nile? What must even infidels think of Islamism if they judge it by the acts of the living? Had the faith and practice remained as in times of old, the enemies of Islam would have been scattered like Ad and Thamud by the roaring wind; but it is otherwise written. The houses of God fall in ruins, and their revenues are dissipated by the stewardship of unjust Nazirs. Oh blind and one-eyed generation! who can mistake the signs of the times? Is not the end of the world at hand—when the avenging sword shall pierce the firmament, and the arousing trumpet thrill through the universe. Oh, my son! repeat these words, and let them sink

into your mind:—'I testify that there is no God—but God, and that Mohammed is the prophet of God.'"

Then little Halil would lisp these words, and with a kiss be dismissed to bed by his parents.

Before the first peep of dawn Sheikh Cassim was up—and on the completion of the prayer of Feger,—the filled pipe was again presented to him by his wife, with the salutation of the day. The adjoining room contained a brasier for charcoal, on which coffee was made; and a sharp dialogue ensued between Sitt Wurdy and the sleepy pitch-black slave girl from Senaar; who, like all other slaves, practically inculcated on her mistress the virtue of patience,—the value of the maxim, "that one volunteer is worth two pressed servitors;" and steadily disciplined Sitt Wurdy into saying the same thing, and in giving the same useless reprimands three hundred and sixty-five times in a year.

While the sun was tipping with gold the bare brown heights behind Cairo, and Sheikh Cassim had taken his second thimble-full of

coffee, accompanied by a loud audible yawn, a grumbling creaking noise was heard in the garden; and a cow, performing a circle, began to impel the water-wheel. Down went the empty jar, strung by ropes of palm fibre, into a deep well, which the vicinity of the Nile kept abundantly supplied with water, and up they came on the other side, nearly full, dropping and splashing; and then performing a circuit, poured their contents into a hollowed trunk of a palm, to be distributed in the various square compartments requiring irrigation. The fresh morning air, and the innocuous early sun, would greet Sheikh Cassim as he ambled on his sturdy mule across the fields that intervene between Boulak and Cairo; and traversing the Ezbekieh, he would strike into the heart of Cairo, paying his visits before the heat of the day had begun to make itself felt; he would spend most of the rest of the day at his place of business, in a quarter very near the middle of Cairo, called Seven Saloons, in which the principal khans, or caravanseries are congregated; and here I will close with two strange contradic-

tions in his character. Although generous in private life, he drove the hardest bargains in the markets of Cairo, and would have split even a nusf if that had been possible ; and secondly, although a strictly religious man, he occasionally relaxed into buffoonery, and took much delight in the conversation of Sheikh Hamood, already mentioned, who had been a sort of court-jester to the Emir Merwan, a prince of the house of Morocco, who picked him up at Suez, took him to the pilgrimage of Mecca, and kept him with him during a half year's residence at Cairo; and on the departure of the Emir for Morocco, he took up his quarters in the house of Sheikh Cassim, where he made himself welcome by his absurd anecdotes, his readiness to be the butt of Sheikh Cassim's moments of pleasantry, and last, not least, he was a most expert arithmetician ; but common sense and the dignity of human nature, were certainly not ingredients in his composition.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

"I THINK," said Cassim to Hamood, on the morning after their visit to the prison, that you have the address of the Jew to whom the ckoors of the Kurd was pledged."

"I have," said Sheikh Hamood, "Ishaak-es-Safaty."

"Well, then," said Sheikh Cassim, in spite of his pride, "I wish to see him out of trouble, and by restoring his wife's ckoors to her I remove all cause for his imprisonment: there is an order for forty zerr mahboubs, which you will get from my saraf (banker), and having paid the sum for which it was pledged, and the interest according to this calculation, I shall be able to restore the ornament, and open the

prison-gates; and as I do not wish my own clerks to know anything of these matters, I wish you to go to the Jews' quarter and manage the matter yourself, as I think the case of the Kurd a hard one, and have a particular desire to see him brought out of prison. So now, Sheikh Hamood, let me see you do this business with a little more ability than some of the other commissions I have entrusted you with."

"I have little doubt," said Sheikh Hamood, "of being able to accomplish your wishes as I have to do with so estimable and well-known member of society as Ishaak-es-Safaty, whose purse is ever open to the needy, more particularly those who have diamonds to pledge, and whose justice cannot be impugned, never having been known to refuse to give back a pledge after payment of principal and interest on interest, so let your mind be at perfect ease on this score. As for the Kurd, his matrimonial adventure has not been a prosperous one, little doubt, but he resolves to forswear the sex, and never marry again. Such was my own resolve at my

third marriage not turning out according to my expectation, but being, in spite of my firm resolution, now arrived at my fourteenth marriage, I think it safest and wisest to make no farther resolutions, unless the advantage of such determinations consist in the pleasure of breaking them."

So saying Sheikh Hamood departed for the Harat-el-Mokasees, so called from the lock of hair which the Jews wear on each temple, which comes out under the turban. Each shop or stall had a money-box in front, divided into drawers; and in the back part a large iron safe, well studded with bolts. So early do the young Hebrews begin to take part in business that some youngsters behind the box counting and changing money, and weighing and examining gold pieces, could not have been above nine or ten years of age.

Sheikh Hamood having received forty zerr mahboubs from the saraf or banker of Sheikh Cassim, now asked for Ishaak-es-Safaty, and turned from the money-changer's bazaar into the neighbouring Jews' quarter, which was for

centuries occupied by the Circassians in the service of the Mameluke sultans before the Turkish invasion of Sultan Selim in 1517, and has now for its sole occupants the children of Israel, but anything comparable to the narrowness of its streets, is not to be found in Cairo. In many of them no horse or mule can enter, and one person can barely pass another, —in fact, a stout citizen could scarcely pass an Oriental beauty of the full standard of flesh without the risk of a fix. It is a perfect rabbit warren, and therefore a curiosity to a stranger — the so-called streets, seeming passages of one immense house. In some places these lanes are built over head, so as to have the darkness of a tunnel; and the air is not only almost stagnant, but in some places so impure as to be loathsome. Some Jews in Cairo are healthy and wealthy, but the filth of the poorer classes is deplorable; and as a necessary consequence their complexion has the pallor of sickness, frequently mingled with cutaneous diseases.

In the corner of a divan, against a window

that looked out on a court-yard, eight or ten feet square, and which consequently permitted little more than twilight in the room, sat Ishaak, a man of long narrow head and face, with the prominent nose of his nation, and a beard between black and grey, his turban of a dark brown lay on the divan beside him, on account of the heat; and a small cotton scull-cap covered his bald head. He was balancing accounts with a book resting on his knees, when Sheikh Hamood entered, and laying them aside he put on his turban, and rose to receive him.

"I believe," said Sheikh Hamood, "you have a ckoors which was pawned with you by a Kurd, Ali Vanli. I come to redeem it."

"For how much?" said the Jew.

"For how much, say you?" said Sheikh Hamood.

"There," said the Jew, taking a paper out of a drawer, "is an obligation for forty zerr mahboobs, payable within three months."

"You gave thirty zerr mahboobs," said Sheikh Hamood, "and besides, the time is not expired. Come, Ishaak, you know the laws on usury."

" Do you threaten me ?" said the Jew, fixing his eyes severely on Sheikh Hamood.

" A joke is a joke," said Sheikh Hamood, who disliked the idea of even momentarily displeasing so despised a person as a Jew then was in Cairo. " You must understand," said Sheikh Hamood, " that if the ckoors is in pawn with you, he that pawned it is himself in pawn in the Cadi's prison ; and Sheikh Cassim, by taking the ckoors out of pawn, wishes the Cadi's prison to yield up its pawn." He then related all the story of the prison, with considerable exaggeration, extolling the munificence of Sheikh Cassim, and concluded, "Oh ! Ishaak, you are one of the richest men in Cairo. Are you not ashamed to take so large a profit ? No wonder that the Jews' quarter is the richest in Cairo."

" Agar prayed to God," said Ishaak, " that he might be equally removed from riches and poverty, and that is our condition. We are not certainly poor, for we have neither horses to mount, nor servants to eat up our substance, and as for riches, that is equally impossible,

from the grinding exactions to which we are subject. Incessantly called on for forced loans, imprisoned, scourged, and maltreated. And they talk of our avarice, usury, and dishonesty —words—words. Were not the ears of my cousin Azrael hacked from his head by that monster, Youssouf Bey; but he, too, gorged with plunder, far from enjoying the fruits of his numerous extortions, has gone to his last account."

So saying, the Jew's eyes flashed fire, and his grey beard trembled from his chin, as he significantly drew his finger across his throat, so as to leave no doubt in the mind of a listener that Youssouf Bey's windpipe had met with some untoward accident. "It is very easy for the Mamelukes to be noble, generous, magnificent, and sincere—but even an act of charity would render us obnoxious to extortion, while they can act the munificent to the needy with all honour."

"You have spoken the truth," said Sheikh Hamood. "The donations in which they are most liberal to the poor, are the bastinado;

and as it is written, 'That what is given to the poor, is lent to the Lord;' the bow-string and the poisoned coffee which they get from time to time in return, may be considered as repayment with interest, in a genteeler and more princely fashion, that frees the receiver from all further doubts and anxieties. As for Youssouf Bey, all Cairo knows that the patience of his friends did not last until he died of old age. As for me," continued Sheikh Hamood, "the only sort of death that I am afraid of, is to have no money in my pocket, and not to know how to fill it again. As for bodily death, I am not afraid of it. Some time ago I dreamed I should die in three days, but on the fourth morning awoke well and healthy; but when the hour does come, nothing will save me. If I said to Azrael (the angel of death), 'Azrael!' —'Well, what do you want?'—'Prolong Sheikh Hamood's life ten days, and he will give you five purses.'—'Five purses! you impertinent scoundrel. How dare you offer such a dignitary as myself five purses?'—'May God deal kindly with yourself, Azrael. Have you

no bowels of compassion? Come, one day more, and I will give you five hundred purses.' —'Not an hour, you son of sin—you have smoked your last pipe.'—'Thou kind Azrael—thou excellent and respected Azrael—prolong his life an hour, and he will give you five thousand purses.'—'*Oskoot-ya Ahmak*. Silence! you dunderhead. Do you take me for an auctioneer from the Khan Halily, who sells life to the highest bidder. So hold your clack and come along.'"

"You speak lightly of death," said the Jew. "It is a solemn and dreadful hour."

The shades of approaching sunset had rendered the abode of the Jew still more gloomy than before; the windows being open, Sheikh Hamood's voice had a strange echo in the solitary court-yard, and he felt a slight compunction of conscience for the light manner in which he had spoken of the angel of death; when a loud whirring noise, and the tinkling of bells, the singing of birds, and the playing of soft music was heard over his head; and looking up, Sheikh Hamood saw a picture move in

its frame as if it had suddenly acquired the vitality of nature; and as the cold perspiration dropped from his temple, he inwardly exclaimed that he had been decoyed into an abode of wonder or magic. He repented of having spoken so lightly of the angel of death, and as if the incantation of the Jew had summoned the minister of destruction — a figure, with a death's head, appeared at the door of the apartment, at the cessation of the tinkling of the bells, and the singing of the strange birds.

"What is that?" said Sheikh Hamood, his tongue cleaving to the roof of his mouth.

"That is Azrael," said the Jew.

"Azrael!" said Sheikh Hamood, with horror.

"Yes, my first cousin, you see how they have mutilated him, torn the eyes out of his head, and cut his nose to the bone."

"And that?" said Sheikh Hamood, pointing to the magic picture, considerably relieved, and wiping the cold perspiration from his visage.

"That," said the Jew, "is a Nuremberg clock. You see how curiously it is contrived; the main wheel appears to be that of a mill,

set in motion by that revolving piece of crystal, representing a water-fall, and the landscape behind is furnished with trees, on which birds sing, and a spire of a Nazarene church, which shows the hour. I can let you have it a bargain," said the Jew.

"No!" said Sheikh Hamood, peremptorily. "It is not in my way;" and considerably relieved and ashamed of the perturbation he had shown, he pointed to a Damascus sword lying upon the shelf above, and asked a sight of it. This formidable implement did not fail to call forth the martial propensities of so doughty a cavalier as Sheikh Hamood. He criticised the lamination of the blade, with the erudition of one familiar with such edged tools, and putting himself through several postures of offence and defence showed the attitudes of Ali Bey, in his exercises at Suez, when on his way to Mecca, which greatly alarmed the Jew. At last, in swinging of the sabre, which was to exterminate the supposed antagonist, it unluckily overturned a long brass lamp on the shelf above, which coming in contact with a

large jar of whiting for paint, with a broad body and narrow base, its contents were in an instant poured out on himself, when he immediately appeared from head to foot, as if he had exchanged clothes with the whitest miller in Cairo.

A loud knock was now heard at the outer door of the house, and the air within being stifling, the Jew and Sheikh Hamood sought the court-yard, where Hamood, taking off his cloak, gave it such a shake as to fill the court-yard with dust.

"One would take this place to be a mill," said Ishaak, scarcely able to resist a smile at Sheikh Hamood's appearance.

"Or a dye shop," said Sheikh Hamood in great dudgeon. "This was a new blue cloak a quarter of an hour ago, and what is its colour now? This comes of the badly balanced sword that you wanted to palm off on me."

Sheikh Hamood seeing a number of other Jews enter on some business, felt much embarrassed; and again shaking his cloak, so as to scatter the new arrivals to the four corners of

the court-yard, put it on again, and hastily returned to the house of Sheikh Cassim in the Mergoosh, his beard and eyebrows still powdered with the whiting; and, having paid the money, forgotten in the confusion to get from the Jew an acknowledgment.

Sheikh Cassim sat in his divan, and heard the hilarity of the household in the court-yard, followed by the entrance of Sheikh Hamood in whitened attire, who forthwith began, breathless, a confused account of mill-wheels, singing birds, Azrael, and the destruction of the jar, all which presented anything but a lucid succession of images to Sheikh Cassim. One circumstance was, at least, certain, the money had been paid, and Sheikh Hamood had returned without either ckoors, or the acknowledgment.

"Decidedly," said Sheikh Cassim, taking off his turban, and re-adjusting his under cotton cap; "it was not intended that you should shine in the transaction of financial business. Get your clothes well dusted, and stick to your account-books at home. Trouble yourself no more about the Kurd. I will send my clerk to

Ishaak to-morrow; and rest assured that you are more successful in the droll stories with which you amuse Halil, when you ride into the fields with him, than in the transaction of business. But next week we shall see you in all your glory, for I have determined that the festival of his circumcision do then take place; and I will not be angry with you on the present occasion, if you will then do your best to keep the guests in good humour."

"That I will do," said Sheikh Hamood, looking somewhat bewildered, and annoyed at the result of his adventure in the Jews' quarter; and quitting the divan of Sheikh Cassim, was again the object of the hilarity of the household, as he crossed the court-yard towards the staircase that led to his own apartment.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CIRCUMCISION FESTIVAL.

We must now give some account of the circumcision festival of Sheikh Cassim's son, which had been looked forward to by Sheikh Hamood with such anxiety. The house in the Mergoosh had been turned upside down, to receive the numerous persons who were to be present. The space in the middle of the court-yard was fitted up with high benches for the guests. Two very old and very tall palm trees, with their rough rugged bark, shot up from the ground, but their thick foliage at the top was not visible for the lines of thick ropes stretching from roof to roof of the quadrangle, and were covered with blue cotton canvas, so as to render

the whole court-yard like a tent. A master contractor of decorations, who keeps a supply of all the appendages of marriage and circumcision festivals, was unpacking camel-loads of tenters, ropes, benches, cressets, oil-jars, and other appurtenances of illumination, and superintending the various operations—the hoisting of festival lanterns and the disposition of coloured lamps.

In the afternoon, when the sun, bound westerly, had got well through the burden of the day, and lacked his meridian heat, but had so purified the atmosphere, that the beholders, looking up through the chinks of the tents, saw a sky of the serenest azure, the company began to arrive. A crowd of boys and paupers had beset the outer gate, the former to criticise the wooden stars and triangles awaiting illumination, the latter to get a harvest from the bounty of the guests. Two large kettle-drums, placed on a stone bench under the archway, were beaten in honour of the entrance of each individual, at first rarely, like minute guns, but as the afternoon advanced, their reverberations

increased in frequency as the parties rapidly arrived.

Among the crowd outside, after the shades of the evening had closed, stood a poor gipsy woman, of the Ghagar tribe, who are hawkers, but not thieves, in contra-distinction to the Nowar, who are addicted to thieving and swindling. She was tall, and of about sixteen years of age. Her face was of a bronze colour, but with perfectly clear and transparent skin. Her dress was of checked black and white cotton cloth, and a certain sweetness of beauty was the natural expression of her countenance; but a masculine boldness in her eye had been acquired in her profession, which was that of a hawker of female girdles and head wrappers, for the turbans of the heroines of European theatres are unknown in Egypt. Two small pieces of gold coin dangled at each ear, and a blue mark was visible at the top of her chin, while her wrists were tatooed in the form of bracelets, as specimens of her own handicraft; for a part of her living was derived from going round hareems and staining the hands and chins

of young girls. Such was Taj-el-Hosh, or, translated, The Crown of the Court-yard, the handsomest gipsy girl in Cairo.

Ah ! little do these within, thought she to herself, know how many souls are made melancholy by those sounds of rejoicing. Singular fate, continued the girl, musing, that has placed me in the most despised and rejected tribe of the human race. What crime have I committed, that I should be viewed with contempt and abhorrence ? I see the lights gleaming in the passage ; the drum beats to welcome the rich, and the poor gipsy must remain outside, and content herself with a view of the triangles, coloured lamps, and lanterns. For us, no hostess comes with the joy of welcome ; and for us, the odours of feasting and the fragrance of perfume is unknown.

" Clear the way, and do not obstruct the guests," said the insolent Negro of Sheikh Cassim, with a loud oath. " Here is a pretty hubbub ! Do you suppose this feast was made for the Ghagar, for they belong to the beasts !"

" And you do not belong to the beasts,"

said the girl, "for if a wild beast be full of food he flies away—if he be hungry he kills; if a Black be in misery, he shuns his fellow-man —if well-fed and prosperous, his nature is cruel;" and then she repeated the proverb usually applied to Blacks from the upper country,

"En jaa harab;
En shibaa katil."

"Hungry he flies;
Satisfied he kills."

On this the Negro went forward, and taking her by the two shoulders, showed her out of the circle. So she shed tears, and said, "What! will not the rich allow the poor to see the illumination even from the street?" At this moment, Sheikh Cassim, who had been standing behind the Negro, and was waiting to receive Nasif Bey, said abruptly to the Negro, "Your gall-bladder, Mohammed, masters your heart. What way is this to speak to the poor girl? Do you think that, when the Prince of the Apostles commanded hospitality to all men, that civility was less a virtue in his eyes than the offering of bread?"

"She is a gipsy," said the Negro, respectfully.

"And is she a Moslem?" said Sheikh Cassim.

"Yes, a Moslem," said the gipsy girl.

"And even if she were not—well, no more words," said Sheikh Cassim. "Keep a more civil tongue in your head to rich and poor, friend and foe, and take her into the hareem. Do not look sulky, but do what you are bidden with alacrity. Take her into the hareem, and tell Zeynab to give her some victuals, and let her sit at the door of the ckaa, and hear the music."

"May God requite you with good," said the gipsy; "may God preserve and make you happy, you and your sons' sons; and blessed be this night, which will not be effaced from our remembrance. Do not think the less of my heart, that I am so humble as to have no means of ever requiting your kindness."

"Your power to requite kindness," said Sheikh Cassim, "is known to God alone, for fortune is a cloud from the white sea."

At this moment the *cortége* of Nasif Bey, one of the Mameluke divan of Egypt, came up, which absorbed Sheikh Cassim's attention; and the Negro, still in a sulky humour, told the girl to follow him. She passed timidly behind him into the outer court, now nearly full of guests, and paused delighted with the spectacle. The luxuriant orange-tree, with its golden fruit—the well-bred hum of soft-speaking voices that floated around, the slightly perceptible odour of incense that impregnated the air; and sweetest of all the sounds of music, in the minor key, executed on the dulcimer, viol, and lute, by the best artists of Cairo, produced on the gipsy a delirious sensation of pleasure. The centre of the court-yard being filled up with benches and guests, the eunuch led the way round by the wall, and, though the face of the girl was veiled, a certain grace in her walk excited criticism as she passed. The lower townspeople in their admiration pronouncing her to be a cow, the better class using the term gazelle; thus denoting that with the one class the quality most prized in the female sex is utility, with

the other grace. At the other end of the court-yard was a staircase leading to the hareem, up which the eunuch led the girl, and knocking at the door a shrill voice of one of the Negro girls cried out, "*Men?*" "A gipsy girl," said the eunuch. "You are jesting with us," answered the voice from within. "Open directly," said the eunuch, sulkily, on which the door was opened, and Mohammed told the Negro girl that it was Sheikh Cassim's orders, that she should have victuals, and a place in the gallery. Zeynab shrugged her shoulders, and took the girl to the gallery, for she did not of course venture into the hall where the ladies were sitting; but having been provided with food sat down contented at the door, casting many a look at the finery inside, and the crowd below.

Sitt Wurdy was dressed in her best, and assiduous in her attentions to her guests. Halil, in bright scarlet, and a kerchief of gold thread around his head, was unconscious of the precise motive of the gathering, and of the unpleasant operation with which it was to terminate;

and delighted beyond measure with the novelty and brilliancy of the scene. The friends of Sitt Wurdy were in all their finery. Hanum, the first wife of Nasif Bey, was a woman of forty years of age, with heavy eyebrows, projecting large lips, and receding chin, so as to have a dull apathetic appearance, notwithstanding her splendid jewels. Fatimeh, the second wife of Nasif Bey, was fifteen years younger, with soft and dreamy eyes; but her beauty beginning slightly to fade from the effects of the climate. These ladies were not on the best terms with each other, and a little sparring had already taken place between them, not to be sure, in looks or epithets, but with those almost imperceptible refinements by which Orientals know how to snub each other under the mask of ceremonious courtesy, with an unenviable skill to which even people of fashion in Europe cannot pretend. These two ladies sat apart, and dinner being completed, aloes were burned in a magnificent silver censer, which stood on a round inlaid stool, the odoriferous fumigation diffusing itself through the apartment.

"And this is your son," said Fatimeh as Halil came forward, and she patted his cheeks.

"It is," said Wurdy, with a sigh.

"And a strong and healthy child," said Fatimeh.

"Strong he is," continued Wurdy, in a somewhat melancholy tone; "for he is the only one left me by the climate of Egypt, which is all-favourable to the fruits of the earth, and so trying to the fruits of the womb."

"True," said Fatimeh, "the soil of Egypt is rich and bountiful, and its climate, although hot, is healthy; but that is a singular property of the air, which visits so heavily the offspring of stranger blood."

"I know it too well," said Sitt Wurdy, "for I am a native of Damascus."

"I have heard of your domestic distresses," said Fatimeh, "but give me the particulars."

"I will tell you that in a few words," said Sitt Wurdy; "I lived seven years the happiest of the happy, and had four children, each the apple of the eye, and the fruit of the liver. Come old age—come sickness or disaster,

thought I, these children are the true wealth that console for all loss of worldly goods; but in the hour appointed my youngest girl died. When my grief abated I consoled myself with the two sons, and the daughter which were left me; but the other girl soon also died. Again I moaned, and again felt consolation, for of my sons both remained, and my youth still gave hopes of issue; but when my elder boy died, I did nothing but swoon, and my last boy was nursed in terror and pain; my anxiety regarded the slightest cough as his last gasp — but, ah! me—poor Nooredin—he too departed to the mercy of God."

"I think," said Fatimeh, "you had better not proceed in your narration, and I reproach myself for calling up such recollections."

"No," said Wurdy, with a melancholy smile; "the cup was bitter, but having drained it to the dregs the recital of it affects me less than you imagine — my tale is soon told. I lived alone at home—the rooms no longer echoed the sweet voices of infancy. I was told to go often to the gardens and baths, and to

seek to dispel my gloom by society, but this aggravated the evil — every child that gambolled with its mother recalled my own,— a trifling word, the slightest circumstance, threw me in the midst of the most lively societies into a state of uncontrollable grief and despair; and my best friends, if they had healthy children, became my unconscious tormentors. At length poor Halil was born, and I often think, that those who have never suffered can never enjoy. Come kiss me, my love—there is no love like that of the mother for the child, but all is to the glory of God, the changer who never is changed."

During this conversation the eyes of the gipsy girl were fixed on Halil, and the caresses of which he was the object. She thought of the happiness (impossible to her) of offspring well dressed—well cared for, and the object of the favour of the great, and remembering the kindness of the parent, she felt a glow of favour for the child. The looks she riveted on the child attracted the attention of Hanum, the first wife of Nasif Bey, who, weak and superstitious, turned alternately from the boy to the

gipsy-girl, and said, "If I had such a child I should be afraid of the evil eye." A sudden lull in the conversation took place, all eyes were turned to the door—the gipsy had caught the word evil eye, and its application to her, and turning aside her head gave way to a torrent of tears.

"You see," said Fatimeh, the second wife of Nasif Bey, "she weeps, and turns away her head—see, she rises to go away."

"Oh, let her go," said Hanum; "I have an internal persuasion that evil may happen to the child—her looks belong not to the lawful."

"The poor gipsy-girl," said Fatimeh, "thinks that the child is beautiful, and where is the harm,—she has risen, and is gone out, wounded in spirit. Who knows what is in the womb of futurity—she may some day preserve that very child from evil! I study people's faces, and dare avow it is my opinion, that there is more good than evil in that face."

Hanum made no answer, but sulkily smoked her pipe, and Sitt Wurdy said to her, "What has fallen from you, oh lady, was from love of

my child."—"And what has fallen from you," said she to Fatimeh, "was equally kind to the poor. — Sheikh Cassim permitted that girl to see the feast, and it would ill become the wife to contract the width of the husband's hospitality. As for the evil eye, I repose in God—may He veil my poor boy with his gracious veil;" and apologising to Hanum, told the slave girl beside her to recall the gipsy, and permit her to sit at the door of the apartment.

Shortly afterwards the music in the saloon ceased, and attention was called to the Ghawazees, or dancing women, down in the courtyard, who, in front of the *ivan*, or recess, in which the beys sat, began one of their dances, with metal castanets and tambourines clanking to the measure of the dance. The open corridor was now crowded with the inmates of the saloon, who went out to view the spectacle! while the gipsy-girl, somewhat overcast, would fain have gone away, had not Sitt Wurdy made her remain. As the dance seemed to give little pleasure to Fatimeh, she began to con-

verse with the gipsy, partly because she was interested in her, and partly because Hanum had expressed her disgust at her.

"In what part of Cairo do you live?" said Fatimeh.

"In Hosh Bardak," said the gipsy, "among my own nation. Just under Sultan Hassan."

"And your occupation?" said Fatimeh.

"I go round the bazaars, and into the hareems, to sell veils, and turban wrappers for females. Ya! Allah! the people think that we are dishonest and untrue,—it is all false,—we love our own nation; and as for myself, I do what I can to earn an honest piastre."

"And are you content with your condition?" said Fatimeh, into whose splendid hareem, no gipsy hawker of common female paraphernalia had ever been admitted.

"Content and discontent," said the gipsy; "is there ever a year without a khamseen wind or a rain? Never! but after all, there is more north wind than khamseen, and more sun than rain. When I bring home little money, my father scolds me, and when I bring home

enough, my step-mother is displeased because I please my father; but, after all, I manage to get along rather pleased than displeased. We are of the poorest of the poor, but, thank God, my father is content with me."

"And what think you of the festival?" said Fatimeh.

"Magnificent indeed," said the gipsy; "surpassing all that I ever saw before in the guarded city of Cairo! For, if a king's son were to be circumcised, what more could be seen of shining lights, and smells of sweet odours, and all manner of entertainments to delight the eye and the ear, and make big the heart."

"You must be a strange set in Hosh Bardak," said Fatimeh; "have you no desire to change your manner of life?"

"Live apart from my nation? Never! O! lady. But let no one suppose that we always remain in the gloomy vaults of the Hosh. In the season of the year, we go to the great fair of Tantah, where thousands flock to the tomb of Said-el-Bedawy, and a small town becomes a

great city. When the spring of the year comes, we have our tour in the Delta, and smell the fragrant air of the endless fields of beans; or we voyage on the Nile, where the moon, and the palm-groves, and the oars splashing on the silver water, with the chorus of the boatmen, sometimes make my gall-bladder burst with delight; or perchance we may be in the Fayoum, in the season of the roses; or at Siout when the caravans arrive from Darfour, bringing wonders from the ends of the earth. Allah-hou-Ackbar! Gipsy I was born, and a gipsy I will die,—and, for all that, if the kind mistress of this house had not a white heart, I should envy her happiness."

"Silence, you foolish girl," said Fatimeh, "and do not envy people whose hearts you do not know."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COURT-YARD.

Down in the court-yard, Nasif Bey, and several of the other Mameluke rulers of Egypt, who had successively arrived with a considerable retinue of servants, were seated in the alcove, along with several of the Ulema, and dinner was served to them on a brass circular tray, about five feet in diameter, laid on a low stool, round which they squatted, and which was covered with savoury Arab dishes. There was neither the beef and pig of Europe, nor the buffalo, camel, or field-rat of Egypt,—but mutton and fowls, roast, boiled, stewed, grilled, with every variety of vegetables, and the vegetables in their turn as principals, with succulent juices as accessories, — the artichoke

stuffed with chopped meat, and the hollowed bamia filled with rice.

A disused divan on the ground floor, which contained lumber and benches, had been cleared out as a second dining room,—the walls of which, being rather dilapidated, and the apartment gloomy and lugubrious, it was new hung all around with mats, and here Sheikh Hamood presided at the entertainment of the secondary guests. Several notorious Tofaydees, or sponges, had attempted to effect an entrance, but had been prevented. These men made a living by acquiring intelligence of all parties and entertainments going forward, and abusing the Oriental hospitality, led a vagabond existence, intruding themselves unasked. When the first guests had dined, the round table was replenished, and the room locked, while the other servants were bringing dishes to complete the table; but, on returning, missed several fowls that they had, a few minutes before, laid on the table, and were unable to conceive how they had disappeared, until they discovered, in a corner, several sponges regaling themselves. These men had

fixed themselves at the barred, but unglazed window; and one of them, drawing a kitten from his pocket, had let it loose on the table, where it pounced on a fowl, and the string with which the cat was harnessed, being drawn to the window, the kitten pulled the fowl with it, and they supplied themselves with a dinner. No remark was made by the servants of Cassim, and the immortal Dando did not, with more perfect indifference, submit to the anger of a tavern-keeper, than these practised sponges bore the sarcasms of the spectators.

As the guests performed their ablutions, the last rays of the sun were clothing with its fawn tints the irregular line of cornices forming the eastern side of the domicile; the blue sky soon grew grey; the slanting tent lost its coat of gold; and, "Allah hou Ackbar!"—God is great!—proclaimed from the minaret of the Ghamry Mosque, broke in upon the hum of the crowd; and the watches were pulled out to be rolled up and set—to sunset; on which prayers were said by the assembled company. The rising moon was seen to add its pallid

splendours to the scene, soon after the chandeliers had been lowered by the numerous pulleys to be lighted; and after the company had dined, and prayed, and chatted, and smoked, and prayed again at the Eshia, a loud flourish of drums was heard, and then the buzz of the eager guests ran through the whole court-yard, which, like the orchestra of some Vauxhall or Tivoli, was a blaze of illumination; and all eyes were directed to a projecting lattice, in the first floor, where the guests of Sitt Wurdy were assembled; and the Sheikha — as the best almeh or female singer of Cairo was called —began, with a voice of more sweetness and flexibility than power, a lay which captivated all her hearers.

A European, at a first or second audience, would find Egyptian singing monotonous; but no one, who has not made the experiment of patient attention, would credit the rapidity with which it improves on acquaintance. I need scarcely inform the reader, that, notwithstanding the profound treatises which the Arabs have written on counterpoint, the variety

and excellence of the instruments of Europe have left the practice of music in Egypt completely in the rear. But, as Paley says, we are a bundle of habits; and the guests, assembled at Sheikh Cassim's, would have discovered no beauty in the most popular air of Cimarosa or Paesiello, had it been sung to them by even Grassini herself. When the air had ceased, a plate was carried round by the attendant on the Sheikha, to collect money for her. He was a stupid-looking fellow, and cried out like a town-crier, "Give a gift, you master of merry-making!" (farah, or merry-making, is also used in an ordinary way, to denote the sense of joy or enjoyment); and at each donation announced it again aloud, but generally took care to name a sum far beyond the truth; but whether the motive may have been to compliment the giver, or to stimulate the liberality of those who had not yet given, is a question open for discussion.

The court-yard did not form a complete parallelogram; at one end a half of the wall receded, and as the recess was out of the blaze

of the illumination, the benches here were scantily filled by a few persons whose modesty or poverty prevented them from pushing their way to a better position. In the further corner sat two men, conversing with each other in a low tone, unnoticed by the crowd of guests, and apparently content to hear the song of the Sheikha at this distance.

"This goes like a knife to my heart," said the elder of the two, "this splendour and feasting, with these Beys and infidel Ulema. The origin of his substance is solely owing to the support his father got from us, when the family still belonged to the true faith. No doubt that the father was both industrious and economical, and that the son, with a good capital, has been a bold and successful speculator; but the origin is owing to us, and now it is all gone—gone to the Moslems, who abhor us and would destroy us if they knew of our existence."

"It is certainly the most magnificent entertainment I ever saw," said the younger of the men.

"It is fortunate that an occasion like this

enables you to examine all the localities of his house without notice. At the back is a gheyt, with a few palm trees; and behind that again, a small house in the blind alley, which is so ruinous that it is almost always to let. The apostate sleeps in that room," continued the elder of the men, pointing to two windows in Sheikh Cassim's establishment. "A narrow stair-case and a strong door bar it from the rest of the house, which is so much the better, as any one, when once in, can secure this compartment of the house from intrusion, if alarm were given; and you see that casement is easily entered by any one who can get to the top of the wall from the gheyt behind. On the other side of the room, where the Sheikha sings, is a part of his gold and jewels, under the marble slab that forms the sole of the recess for the water-jars. On lifting six pegs in the dark closet behind it, the slab draws out like a drawer, and a hollow box is below."

"But tell me," said Khaled, who was the younger of the two, "how or where did you get a knowledge of all these particulars?"

"First of all from the mason who originally constructed the hiding-place, and was one of our nation; and secondly, through an old female servant, who lived in the house in the time of the father, and, although one of the faithful, was allowed to remain, and only died about a year ago; and," continued Salih-bela Dukn, "Abd-el-Aziz and I have always been at war about this business. He is all religious fervour and enthusiasm, and talked for a long time of keeping our project clear of all pecuniary gain; but I am not an enthusiast. I look at the world as it is, and think that our affairs are best to be advanced by keeping the main chance in view. Abd-el-Aziz is a man I respect, but he has too much prophetic gloom and exalted fervour for my taste. I look at things as they are. If we had a revelation from on high, or a gift of enchantment, Abd-el-Aziz would be right; but this is our politics, and we shall never succeed unless we go about it with worldly prudence, cunning, and secrecy. So he is now perfectly resigned to our opinions, for we all told him that otherwise we would not

engage in it. He at length yielded, giving us a great deal of abuse about our worldliness and degeneracy from ancient times."

"But," said Khaled, "you have not yet pointed out to me the apostate."

"He is at the other end of the feast," said Salih-bela Dukn, "concealed by the *ivan*; there—there—he comes this way."

"Which?" said Khaled.

"The stout man with the pink cloth robe."

"Great God!" said Khaled, "is that Ebn Daoud, the apostate?"

"Yes," said Salih, "that is the apostate, who is commonly called Sheikh Cassim by the Moslems, but to whom, from familiar habit, we never give any other designation but that of the son of his father."

Khaled, struck speechless, gazed vacantly on all around him, as he saw that the apostate he was to strike was no other than the Sheikh Cassim, who had relieved him from prison. At first his faculties were prostrate, but on a moment's reflection, he said to himself, "I will not only not be the means of his death,

but, please God, I will be the means of saving his life." He therefore proposed, after a short interval, that they might now return home; but Salih had no idea of having his physical pleasures disturbed, and he said, "Our business need not in the least prevent us from continuing to enjoy the lights, the music, and the other entertainments."

First of all came up two Turkish wrestlers, who were accustomed to show off their feats at the *Doseh*—an annual procession of a mounted dervish, over the prostrate bodies of fanatics, on the Prophet's birthday. With the exception of canvas breeches, saturated with grease, reaching from the waist to above the knee, the wrestler was quite naked; his body and legs were rubbed over with oil, so as to shine in the sun; and his feet and hands were of enormous size. "How are you?" said one of the guests to him. "Praise be to God! like an iron chain," answered the wrestler, implying the strength of iron and the pliability of a chain. But it was evident, from his grey and nearly white hairs, that the poor fellow was at least

twenty years beyond his prime. The other wrestler was an Arab, of five-and-twenty: and as the company began to arrive for the procession, they had a struggle; but the gripes, twists, parries, contortions, and falls were evidently all preconcerted, mutual injury, or an actual trial of strength, being ingeniously simulated. Then came a passage of arms between two swordsmen, with targets of hippopotamus hide, from the upper country; but as the one combatant, a youth of fifteen, was the grandson of the other, it could not be expected to be very deadly.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CIRCUMCISION PROCESSION.

It was past midnight when Khaled got home, and retired to bed, but not to sleep, so completely had the event of 'last night appalled him. The idea of injuring a benefactor struck him with horror; on the other hand, the injunction of his father to give implicit obedience to Abd-el-Aziz, and to be in all matters the executant of his dark will, and of the base and grovelling plans of the less disinterested part of the nation, filled him with disgust; it was only the hope of saving Cassim that prevented him from making a clean breast to Abd-el-Aziz, and making the agonizing confession of his resolution not to assist, but oppose him. His own death, which might be the

result of such a declaration, was the least that deterred him, but this, instead of saving Cassim, would only postpone the vengeance about to befall him; and on the other hand, to have his memory loaded with curses by all whom he held most dear, was no light matter. With the tortures of embarrassment and irresolution was mingled the ignorance of how he could save Cassim, without betraying to public justice those whose bread he was eating; for, however much he might abhor the proceedings they had planned, and wished him to execute, he revolted at any sort of treachery, even to those whose proceedings he could not approve. The occasional shooting pangs of a violent and now almost hopeless love, assisted in stretching him on a moral rack, and during all this terrible and long-remembered night, he lay awake, with the melancholy rush of the waters of the Khalidge in his ears, sighing for daylight, and yet nauseating the obligation of seeming a willing accomplice, and of showing, in the morning, no trace of his agitation to Abd-el-Aziz. At length, as day dawned, Nature exhausted herself; but he

was soon awakened by the voice of Abd-el-Aziz crying, "Oh, ho, sleeper! late to bed, late to rise."

Khaled rubbed his eyes, and starting up, excused himself, and said, "An hour ago I ought to have descended and kissed your hand."

"All you mountaineers," said Abd-el-Aziz, "when you get to Cairo, get a taste for late hours, and the delights of the town. Girl, where are you? And what saw you yesternight? Girl," continued he, in a higher key, "are you deaf? Get coffee and chibouques."

"The portals and entrances of pleasure," said Khaled, "are easy, fair, and inviting."

"And the exits painful, rough, and unsightly," said Abd-el-Aziz. "With my eighty summers and winters,—an age perfectly astonishing in Egypt—I may say that I have had wealth of years, and poverty of the good things of the world, for I had strength of mind to eschew the corruptions of the flesh; but miser as I have been in healthful vigour, I have been

a prodigal in cash. Do not, young man, congratulate yourself on avoiding one of these expenditures without the other."

"I have little experience in the ways of the world," said Khaled, "but imagine that it is better to have wealth of health, than an abundance of mere money, and poverty in the capacity to enjoy it."

Khaled was soon dressed, and presenting Abd-el-Aziz with the end of his girdle, and taking himself the other end of it, they both went to opposite extremities of the room, and having adjusted it to his waist, Khaled began to spin round like an opera dancer, or a bobbin set in motion, until the long sash, wound round his waist, brought him again to where Abd-el-Aziz stood, and then, putting up his upper robe, coffee was discussed.

Abd-el-Aziz now began to give Khaled more minute information and instructions as to how they were to proceed,—but, at first, he might as well have repeated them to the door-post,—the event of the previous evening rendered him so frequently absent, and Abd-el-Aziz repeated

and explained until Khaled was ashamed of either his apparent stupidity or transparent inattention, and felt that, in order to save Cassim, he must pay more attention to those plans, which we need not at present detail, as their results will unfold themselves in due time.

"I hope," concluded Abd-el-Aziz, "that the business will turn out well; but one thing goes to my heart, and that is, that our people make it too much a mere matter of worldly gain, and an affair of every-day calculation. No doubt the victim is rich, and that the wealth that ought never to have gone to the Moslems may come into our nation again; but I look upon it principally as a solemn example to the whole nation, and a beacon of warning and terror. God knows, I grumble, at times, at my own poverty, but it is the lower, earthly, and temporal view of the matter, to calculate, as Salih does, only profit and loss, as if it were a matter of an auction in the Khan Halily. Remember, young man, that we have two natures, a nobler and a baser; and that if there

were no temporal gain, a prime essential in our nobler nature is to keep the faith together by a great act of vengeance."

"You say," said Khaled, who could scarcely contain himself, and yet had not the courage to speak out, "that vengeance belongs to the nobler part of our nature?"

"Certainly, my son, for the numbers of our people are limited. We cannot increase like the Moslems by proselytism, and therefore we hold together not only by the awful truths of the only sound theology, but by the advantages of mutual assistance and the terror of punishment to those who secede, from which there is no escape, however long the lapse of time, and however great the distance to which the apostate may go. I say, then, that our Salih is far too worldly, and makes this affair more a matter of temporal gain than is consistent with the conduct of those who believe with all their heart and soul."

"But," said Khaled, "are you not patriarch —have you not power?"

"My son, you have still to go to school—you

are sensible, and one may speak more freely to you than to the generality of young men. Patriarch and governor are other names for first servant. In every breeze the palm top's resistance to the power that would prostrate it lies in its relation to the root. I am called patriarch and I think I look to heaven, but the earthly prevails over the ethereal; and as I will not part company with my root, things do not go fully to my mind. I could get plenty of lip obedience, but that is hollow and unreal—so to have the real, if ever so little, the patriarch and governor must obey in commanding: but let me see, it is now three o'clock (Arab time), so I must now go to the Wekalet Saboon to hear the last news from Syria, and you had better go to the Mergoosh, where you will see the grand circumcision procession."

So saying each proceeded on his own way; Abd-el-Aziz to the Wekalet Saboon, the so-called soap khan frequented by Syrians; and Khaled to the street in which Sheikh Cassim lived, as by daylight he did not venture inside; and after waiting for some time in the crowd the

procession issued from the porch, the kettle drums, tambourines, and clarionets, playing what a European would call the Devil's delight, and a man mounted on high stilts taking the lead. The most prominent object in the procession was the *heml* or barber-surgeons' symbol and apparatus, like a little tripod cupboard, carried aloft. The attendants of the Nackeeb-el-Ashraf, or magistrate of the nobles, were recognisable by their furrowed kaouks of green cloth; and then came little Halil, dressed in his gayest apparel, mounted on a horse, and held up by two men on each side, behind whom was Sitt Wurdy, and the woman-kind, mounted on high saddled asses.

Ascending the Mergoosh, the procession soon came to the great line of bazaars, which is the high street of Cairo, the first of which is that of mats, which is so obscure even at midday, from having the top almost covered over. On each side of each shop were suspended those fine straw mats which, from their coolness in summer, are a substitute for the carpet in almost every Egyptian house, and, along with

a few earthen pots, constitute the furniture of the poorest hut. Here a blockade took place, a string of camels coming from the opposite direction, and, after a good deal of pushing and wrangling, they got out of the darkness to an open sunny part of this great high-street of Cairo, and the mountebanks, who had no scope for their exertions in the dark, narrow mat bazaar, on arrival at the Bayn-el-Kasrayn came to a full stop, and commenced their tricks. They are called in Arabic *mohabaseen* and *migalateey;* the former being what we would call jack-puddings or merry-andrews, and the latter, performers of tricks of legerdemain. But very different were the exercises here once in a day, for although this part of Cairo be now covered with streets, it was, in the time of the Fatimite caliphs, an open space, as its name denotes, "between the two palaces;" and here for many a long day after the elevation of Saladin to power, was the scene of tilt and tournament as gay and splendid as that which an Ivanhoe may have seen at Ashby de la Zouch, as far as horse and foot, knight and

squire could make them, but in which no eastern Rowena could award a palm to victory.

While these exercises were going on the procession stopped, and Khaled received a sudden surprise, while standing at the door of a *café* of a side street. On being familiarly slapped on the back, and turning round, he perceived Sheikh Hamood, the humble friend of Sheikh Cassim.

"How is your condition?" said Hamood, jovially.

"Well, thank you," said Khaled, scarcely able to conceal his embarrassment.

"Ah, ha!" said Hamood; "it is better to be outside, enjoying the fresh air, than within the close walls of a prison. I call myself a good judge of air, and of all that is good for mind and body."

"No doubt," said Khaled; "and I am under eternal obligations to Sheikh Cassim."

"What say you to the procession?" said Hamood.

"It would burst the gall-bladder of a lion," said Khaled.

"Why, yes," said Hamood; "to you, who have come out of prison into the fresh air, it must be delightful. I know something of the value of good air and good water."

"Are you a native of Cairo?" said Khaled, rather anxious to change the current of conversation.

"No," said Sheikh Hamood; "I am from Suez."

"I need not ask you," said Khaled, "if you prefer Cairo to Suez?"

"*Ouih!*" responded the Sheikh, with the motion of his lips that resembled a scarcely audible whistle. "Indeed you need not; there is no comparison."

"I fancy there is no place like Cairo," said Khaled. "What city has a river like the Nile?"

"Stop there!" said Sheik Hamood, his patriotism rather piqued. "You do not know Suez."

"Has it the good air you so much prize?"

"*Ouih*, the air of Suez is delightful, while that of Cairo is not half so good."

"Yes," said Kaled; "but I understand that your water is brackish."

"You have no idea how good brackish water is for the health; the men of Suez are men of iron," said Sheikh Hamood, doubling his fists, and shaking them as if he would, like Samson, pull down the portals of the house.

"But," said Khaled, "where there is no Nile and no gardens, as at Suez, the weather must be fearfully hot?"

"Oh no!" said Sheikh Hamood, who would not allow that Suez was in any way deficient in a single attraction of existence. "I almost think that Suez is cooler than Cairo."

"And how are the women in Suez?" said the Jack Pudding, who now entered, his face almost blue with standing on his head, and the perspiration streaming down his temples, and who called loudly to the coffee-boy for a draught of water, which, as he drank, Khaled perceived that his hands were of peculiar formation, having two palms growing out of each wrist, and two very long fingers projecting from each of them. Khaled thought at first that

his knuckles had been split open to the wrist by a hatchet, and not joined again, but both hands were alike, and the lines on each of the four palms quite distinct. "Ay," said this Adonis, "how are the women in that country; that's the point that interests me. Are they handsome in your country?"

"*Ouih!*" said Hamood; "when the air is good and the water brackish, how can the women be otherwise than good-looking. I wish I were back in Suez; I was always happy there. Then there is a coming and a going with ships to Yemen and the Hedjas, and a perpetual succession of the news of the events of the whole world, — of Cairo, Djiddeh, and Mecca and Medina;—what the Mameluke beys of Egypt did, and what other princes and governors have said and done, and ordered and forbidden. Suez is the centre of the world," said Sheikh Hamood, triumphantly.

"Out of Cairo," said the Jack-pudding, "there is no place like Nubia. What can a man eat, like the dates of Ibreem?

What can he drink like the water of the Nile?"

"Then why did you leave it?" said Khaled.

"My father," said the Jack-pudding, "lived in one of the villages of the country of Derr, and when my mother died, my father married again; but his wife detested my brother and myself. She used to break the pots and plates when he was out, and then, when he came home, said that we had done it. So my father used to say, 'Oh Ahmed! Oh accursed! Why did you do this?' So, tired of the endless disputes, I said to my brother, 'Where shall we go? Shall we go to Darfour, where the people sleep on fine ashes to keep themselves cool, or to Cairo, or to Alexandria on the salt sea?' 'There is no life away from the Nile,' said my brother. So we took some dates, and entered a ship, and came to Cairo; and here I lived by my hands, but not by the labour of them. I showed them about, and pocketed the fuddahs (small coins) that the people gave me; but, tired of idleness, I wished to become acquainted with the arts and

sciences, and can now walk on my hands as well as you can walk on your feet, and exhibit cup and ball with any man on this side of the mountain of Kaf, which is the end of the world."

"I wish I were a Jack-pudding," said Khaled to himself, as he turned melancholy away to go home; for, Sheikh Hamood having proposed that they should go and have some chat with Sheikh Cassim during the procession, Khaled felt by no means disposed to accept the proposition or to have any encounter with him, under present circumstances, and therefore politely excused himself.

Sheikh Hamood and the Jack-pudding thereupon rejoined the procession, which continued its course: handfuls of salt being from time to time thrown at the principal members of the procession, which proved sometimes rather sharp work for the eyes; but an incident soon occurred, which diverted the attention from the coarse jokes of the merry-andrews, the salutes of salt, and the antics of the jack-puddings. At the bazaar of Sultan-el-Ghoury they seemed

to enter a magnificent Gothic cathedral, an effect produced by a mosque on one side of the street and a tomb on the other, of colossal proportions; while, notwithstanding the breadth which separates them, the street is here roofed in by great rafters, stretching from cornice to cornice, the dimly lighted, pure and beautiful Saracenic architecture of the beginning of the sixteenth century, with the brilliant colours of the dresses, producing an effect like that of a grand picture of the Venetian school, while a golden ray of sunshine, shooting through a crevice in the roof, bisected the limpid gloom, with its bright and well-defined radiance. Nasif Bey, on horseback, here met the procession; but another bright reflection from something the sunbeam had fallen on, momentarily played on his face, and he pronounced aloud the word *Elmas!* On which Sheikh Cassim suddenly felt his pocket, and missed his diamond snuff-box, which he never used except on great and festival occasions like this.

"My diamond-box is gone!" said he.

"There is the thief!" said the Bey, pointing

to a dark-complexioned old man, with long regular features and black glowing eyes. The man quickly made a motion to let the box drop, but, caught in the fact, evasion became impossible, and, in spite of his own cries and the loud lamentations and somewhat unreasonable entreaties of Sitt Wurdy and the bey's wife that he should be spared, he was collared and carried forward to the Shoe-bazaar of the Cassabat Rodouan, in the middle of which is a gate, where a lamp was burning, although it was broad daylight. The thief's jaw dropped as he entered the court-yard, as if there was something in his throat he could not swallow; and no wonder, for he was in a mortal terror, as he saw, rolled up in one corner, a bloody bull's-hide;—for here, housebreakers caught in the night were summarily beheaded, and the corners of the hide being gathered up, the body of the malefactor was usually put on an ass and conveyed to the washing-place at the Roumeyleh. However, the thief knew that his doom was not to be death, when the sergeant of police ordered a little pan of pitch to be put on

a charcoal fire, and, when it had boiled, his feet were bound, his left hand firmly grasped by a strong canvas, and his right hand hacked off just at the wrist, and the stump being plunged into the pitch-pan, he fainted away from pain; and on being asked who he was, answered, that he was a gipsy from Hosh Bardak, and, being put on an ass, was taken home.

This incident had thinned the procession of several of the more curious; although Cassim, content to have his box again, never left the procession. Sitt Wurdy considered it a bad omen, and, turning round to the west, she returned to the Mergoosh by the Derb-Ginein, near the Syrian quarter; and on arrival at home the circumcision ought to have taken place, but the barber having felt the pulse of Halil, declared him to be too agitated, and the ceremony being postponed to the following morning, took place in the presence of a much smaller company than formed the procession.

CHAPTER XV.

HOSH BARDAK.

Separated from the Castle of Cairo by the Roumeyleh, or public square, is the mosque of Sultan Hassan, the most magnificent temple of Islamism. Four enormous pointed alcoves form a hypæthral court, over which swells a simple dome and minarets of unequal height; and such was the expense of its construction, that the sultan said repeatedly, that he should abandon it, if it were not from the fear of ridicule attaching to the name of a sovereign who undertook what he could not complete. Neither buttress nor clerestory, chevroned niche nor fretted pinnacle, break the sublime simplicity that rises through eight lofty floors of the collegiate apartments to the very architrave;

and there Saracenic art, luxuriating in all the revelry of stalactite and pendant, gives to the edifice its crowning beauty, and receives in turn, from the severe grandeur of the elevation, that full and ample relief, which florid tracery oftener seeks than finds in the Lombard, Norman, and later Byzantine styles of architecture, where decoration is used, not to adorn, but to dismember, not to increase grace, but perversely to diminish magnitude of effect.

The classic scholar might trace, in this noble monument of the fourteenth century, how the rounded lines of beauty in antique statuary were transferred to the gigantic Arabic writing on the wall; while, on the pavement, he might see those lines, of which the circle is the unit in the decorations of Pompeii, converted to the triangle in the hands of a polished people, to whom the imitation of the human form was forbidden, and to whom the impartial historian must assign the happy union of geometry and art.

A few paces north from this mosque, in the vicinity of the armourers' bazaar, is a scene of

a totally different description,—the ruins of a noble palace, all the marbles and rich tissues of which have long since disappeared, and of which nothing is seen but shattered pavements, and crumbling pointed arches. This is Hosh Bardak, the court-yard of the Emir of that name, whose munificence in the fourteenth century was only second to that of Sultan Hassan himself; but his political fortunes, so bright at one time, not prospering in the end, he was murdered, and his house given as a prey to the flames, and according to tradition, a Weli, or inspired saint, had written these lines on him:

"Oh! cursed, son of accursed,
Who will extinguish this fire?
(Which will burn) in all time night and day."

And, as if in fulfilment of the prophecy, the gipsy forges of Cairo are now ensconced in the alcoves of the ruined palace of the Emir Bardak; but while, in all Europe, there appears to be only one tribe of gipsies—in Egypt, there are two, the Nowar, who have all the thieving and wandering propensities of the race throughout Europe,—and the Ghagar, who are the more

settled and industrious, both being off-shoots of the great Indian tribes, that, after their expulsion from the land of their birth, maintained, for so long a period, a warlike reputation on the shores of the Euphrates and Tigris, at a period when their existence was unknown to Europe.

In an inner apartment of Hosh Bardak, with a vaulted roof, perfectly black from smoke, which found its way to the open air through a break in the arch, and which had formerly been the kitchen of the palace, were two men and a woman; the oldest of the men lay on a mat by the side of the wall, apparently in considerable pain, and exclamations escaped him from time to time, which showed that severe mental as well as physical pain agonized him. The other man sat on his haunches by his side, while the woman, who was about fifty years of age, with a thin withered countenance, and her chin marked with blue, was occupied, blowing some embers of charcoal, to cook a small earthern pot of vegetables, close to which was a large white dog, of ugly and uncleanly aspect,

watching the progress of the culinary operations.

"And how is your hand now?" said the man on his haunches to the other.

"How should I know, since it is either at the Cassabat Rodouan, or at the Mounds, or thrown into a sink," said the wounded man, who was no other than the thief caught in the attempt to rob Sheikh Cassim.

"Pardon me," said the other, "I mean your wrist."

"Why," said the other man, grinning and contorting his features with an effort to be at ease, "I seek patience and find it not; when the wrist is easier I fall a-thinking, and get furious, and when my fury is out my wrist pains me again, so that I am between Munker and Nekeer."

At this moment Taj-el-Hosh, the gipsy-girl, whose acquaintance we have already made, entered the place, she belonging to the settled tribe of gipsies called Ghagar, who lived by industry and petty deceptions, and paid no taxes; while the persons we here describe belonged to

the tribe of Nowar, notoriously addicted to theft, vagabondage, and a prison existence. As Taj entered the dog growled, and was preparing to make a move, when the old woman, seizing her slipper, knocked it on the nose, and sent it sneaking to the other corner.

"Still here!" said Taj: "and how goes the wound?—we want you away from here; you bring us into disrepute. Are we not Ghagars, and industrious folks, who gain an honest living? Are we under the Pasha as you are? Are we not free men and women, whom the Waly never has under lock and key, prison bolt, or castle bar? We have given you leave to stay in the Hosh, and you have made it 'a den of thieves.' Ya Allah! if that man were not in pain, and deserving humanity, all of you, crone, dogs, and Nowar, should have to tramp off on your travels again. We shall have to suffer for your disorders, for you get the Hosh into disrepute by your doings."

"Gently," said the younger man. "Nowar have frequented Hosh Bardak before you came

out of the egg-oven, and will frequent it when you are dead and gone. Show your papers for the possession of these vaults. Are you of the daughters of Bardak, that you claim the Hosh for yourself? Keep yourself in a better humour, and you won't grow old so quick. You have had a bad day's sale in the bazaar, and you are in a cross humour. Did no one answer to your call?" and he began to imitate the cry of the Ghagar women in the bazaars, "Ya-binat," &c.

"Silence, you ruffian, you would do better to imitate the deed of the honest, than mimic their cry. You want lodgings! well, kill as well as steal, and then you will get bed and washing at the Maghsal of the Roumeyleh." —Murderers' bodies are washed there.

"Nay, nay, Hosh Bardak is better. Come, crone, why do you not do the honours of the Hosh, and ask Taj to sup with you?"

But the old woman shrugged her shoulders, took no notice, and went on with her cooking.

"Oh, ho!" said Taj, with a wink, "you

make me out to be a guest in Hosh Bardak," and on this she indulged herself in a loud contemptuous laugh; "no such thing, you shall learn another story, for I have prepared for the invalid a cooling drink that will delight soul and body, and which I will fetch directly. Come, cheer up, Mahmoud," said she to the man extended on the mat, "get on your legs again, and turn to honest courses, with the whole world before you, and then Nowar and Ghagar may live together in Hosh Bardak, without quarrelling. Ya Allah! to ask people how are their bodies, or their children, or their fathers, or fortunes!—ask them how are their consciences, and remember the verses of Ebn Kharouby, that old Hamid repeats at the coffee-shop:

"'My conscience dark, the world 's a-gloom,
The sun is dim, I see the tomb;
So near, methinks, my youth is fled,
Wrinkles on brow, and grizzled locks on head.

"'My conscience clear, the world 's a-gay,
Nature reflects the orb of day;
And 'twixt the horns of silver light,
I seem to see a moon of fourteenth night.'"

"You are always ready with your scraps of poetry," said the young man. "Will poetry lay on the man's hand again?—sound without sense."

"Nay, nay, by Allah, she is right," said the man on the mat; "her sense is as good as her sound; but we are like the palm-branch at the cow's chest that floats no one knows where, a chance for Rosetta, and a chance for Damietta." *

Taj now departed, and returned in a few minutes with a drink which she had prepared for the wounded man, which he drank with thanks, on which she returned to her own end of the Hosh.

"And how runs time?" said the man on the mat.

"The night prayer has not yet been called; but here comes Mohammed," on this, a man entered, who had something of the shabby disreputable air of those who hawk goods by auction through the bazaars.

* The apex of the Delta, called "Batn-el-Bakar," where the waters of the Nile divide.

"Selam-Aleykom," said Mohammed, as he entered, "I ought to have been here before now, but was near getting into trouble. It is easy and pleasant to catch the stuff, and not so easy to get it off, and catch the cash for it."

"Very pleasant indeed to catch the stuff," said the old man, holding up his stump, "and very unpleasant for you to catch the cash for it, seeing how rich you have become."

"What! handless?" said Mohammed, looking blank and surprised.

The younger man then related what had occurred on the previous day at the circumcision procession; and when the matter was discussed, and Mohammed had expressed his sympathy, he followed the younger man into the inner apartment, a closet or small apartment, quite dark by daylight, which in the time of the Emir Bardak had been entered by a cupboard, and served as a hiding-hole to the Emir, but the wood part of which had disappeared in the conflagration that consumed the palace; and here, at the end of the closet under a fagot of wood which they removed, was a square slab of

pavement, which being lifted with some difficulty, a staircase was seen to lead to the vaults below, whither the gipsy descended with a paper lantern in his hand, followed by Mohammed, and having arrived at the foot of the staircase, found themselves in a large vault: here, crossing a species of passage, they entered a dry cellar, filled with a variety of objects, including wearing apparel and arms, and on a table were watches, silver coffee-cup holders, and a filigree censer.

"This censer hangs on our hand," said the gipsy.

"And what can I do in the matter?" said Mohammed; "its value is in the curious workmanship; if we melt it, the silver is only a few ounces; if we attempt to sell it in Cairo, we risk discovery. Our only chance is to find a traveller for Constantinople."

Close to the door of the cellar were the saddle-bags of a traveller, which were pointed out by the gipsy as a new object. The bags were open, and they began taking out all the articles one by one; and when Mohammed

had looked them through, he shrugged his shoulders and said, "Surely you cannot expect much out of this lot,—nothing to melt,—nothing of real value, except the new gold and silk abay, and that at the most is not worth two zerr-mahboubs."

"Conscience," said the gipsy; "have you no recollection of the living that you have had out of us for so many years? Recollect that if things go wrong with us, and Hosh Bardak makes acquaintance with the Waly, we are only the journeymen employed by clever Mohammed. What will you give for the lot?"

"Three zerr-mahboubs is all that I can reasonably give," said Mohammed, with an air of honest decision, which contrasted singularly with the vicious cunning of his eye, and the taciturnity of his habitual manner.

"Put up thy purse," said the gipsy, kicking back the bags after Mohammed had sought to tempt him with the sight of money; "if Mohammed do not give his journeymen their fair hire for doing his work, they are better to

share with the Waly. Four mahboubs, that is my last word."

"There are three," said Mohammed.

"Let us quit the vault," said the gipsy, apparently in a huff: but Mohammed adding a few more silver pieces, began to put together the things in the bag, while the gipsy, soon reconciled, told Mohammed to be quick; and laying aside the bag to be called for on the morrow, they reascended the stairs, and Mohammed went on his way, while the gipsy remained within the upper vault, until he had readjusted the trap-door and the fagots; but on the threshold of the apartment in which the elder gipsy remained with the crone, he heard a voice in colloquy with this worthy couple.

"And what is this business for which we are to receive this sum?" said the old man.

"To carry off a child for a short time, and treat him well during his absence from his father's house; and then to deliver him to me."

"All depends on persons and places," said the old man. "Is it easy or difficult? who are the parties?"

"Sheikh Cassim in the Mergoosh has a son, who is taken by a Nubian servant every Friday afternoon to the Long Garden; and there will be nothing more easy in such a crowd and confusion of persons, than to find the means of conveying him out of the way."

"Oh! that is a difficult business. Sheikh Cassim! one of the eyes of the town; that is quite another affair, for he is surrounded with servants. Do you pay cash down?"

"We pay twenty dollars down, and fifty as soon as the business is done."

The wounded man, smarting with resentment at the loss of his hand, seemed to be reflecting, and the younger gipsy was no sooner seen by Khaled, the stranger, to enter the apartment, than he said, "What, the Dervish of Bilbeis!" and apostrophising him at the top of his voice, cried out, "Foul and infamous impostor! have I at length found thee — that in religious guise goest about this land to prey upon and ensnare the inexperienced? Know that I will have purse, bag-

gage, and all that thou hast taken, and a full settlement of our accounts."

"Here is a simple and inexperienced young man," said the mock dervish, whose real name was Hassan, "who wishes to deprive a Moslem of his beloved son, and send him into the country to smell the sweet fragrance of beans in the encampment of the Nowar. If there is to be a weighing and a balancing, there is what I throw into the scale," on which he lifted a pistol, and with perfect good-humour looked at it, holding it in the air, and showing it to Khaled in great hilarity.

Khaled, feeling himself in a false position, and mortified to the core by the complication gathering around him, was about suddenly to rush out of the Hosh; but looking round, he saw the door of the apartment barred by the old hag, who stood there with a long kitchen-knife in her hand.

"What! is this a murder trap?" said Khaled.

"Do not be a fool!" said Hassan; "sit quietly down, and let us talk the matter over.

You plan an abduction for which you deserve to lose your life;—hold your tongue as to the loss of your baggage, and the Nowar will not only say nothing of yourself or your accomplices—but, as our accounts are not yet settled with Sheikh Cassim and the police of Cairo, your benevolent wish to give the Sheikh's son a little country air will be accomplished. So put up your knife, old woman, and let us have a mouthful of coffee. And as for you, young man, I make you welcome to Hosh Bardak Sit down, and let us talk over all the details of your plan, and come to a settlement, both as to execution and payment."

On this Khaled sat down in gloomy silence, more determined than ever to defeat the plans of Abd-el-Aziz, of which he was the unwilling instrument, and having, after settling with the gipsy what was to be done in accordance with the instructions which he had received from the patriarch, reiterated his wish that the boy should be well treated, took his departure from Hosh Bardak, wishing that an earthquake might swallow it and all its inhabitants.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PLOT.

On the Thursday following this last transaction, Khaled, according to the instructions he had received from the patriarch Abd-el-Aziz (whose name no way appeared in the matter), rented a house in a blind alley, which had been pointed out to him. Renting a house in Cairo is not so formidable an affair as it is in Europe, for an abundance of habitable houses are to be had by the month in the Egyptian metropolis, as the purchase of a few divans, mats, bedding and kitchen utensils enable a stranger to be quickly installed. The house in question, which had been previously tenanted by one Ali-el-Gedawy, was not even furnished, as flight, after

the termination of the operation projected, was contemplated. Behind the house was a small piece of unwatered ground, and consequently without a blade of grass; but a couple of palms vegetated on the latent humidity, which was communicated, one scarce knew how, from the neighbouring grounds.

Khaled had given the key to Salih Bela Dukn — literally, the beardless Salih, for he had not a long and vigorous hair on his body, and was shabby and cowardly in character, but as cunning as a fox; and he was engaged in dusting the place, while Khaled went for Abd-el-Aziz, in order that a conference might take place in this locality.

"Were you impatient for us?" said Abd-el-Aziz, as Salih opened the door to him and Khaled.

"I was," said Salih; "and somewhat hungry too."

"Business never allows Salih to forget his appetite and his purse for one moment," said Abd-el-Aziz to Khaled, with a chuckle, in which he very seldom indulged. "Have you

seen anything since we left you?" continued he, addressing Salih.

"Only the clouds of dust in cleansing out the room, and the riding-boots of Ali-el-Gedawy, or somebody else, which have been left behind in that press," said Salih, showing a pair of old red riding boots.

"Salih is hungry," said the old man; "let us see what provisions we have."

On which Khaled opened a reed reticule, containing provisions, and Salih, pulling a dusty invalided stool out of a corner, which served as a table, and all three sitting down on an old mat, made a frugal meal. Salih expressing his own discomfort by regretting that the old man should not have a better cup of coffee. But the ruminations of Abd-el-Aziz were very different from those of Salih. He remained for some time silent and absorbed in thought, and at length said, with exultation—

"Now is the hour of accomplishment drawing near. We have waited long, but we are at length in sight of the haven."

"Or of the sunk rock on which we will founder," said the beardless Salih.

"The seaman that has an object steadily in view must not care for obstacles," said Abd-el-Aziz. "The High Ali favours the well-devised plan, the strong will, and the persevering sequence. This house, let me now inform you, Khaled, is exactly behind that of Sheikh Cassim's. To-morrow night the boy will in all probability be in Hosh Bardak, and we will have a boat ready for you to descend the Nile with him, and thereafter Cassim must die."

"And we become masters of a considerable portion of his wealth," said Salih.

"Rejoice, Khaled," said Abd-el-Aziz, "that you have the honour among all our nation of striking this blow. I am old and feeble. Salih is unused to the shedding of blood, but you are accustomed to battle and death. You have the strong arm and the steady hand of youth; and there," he concluded, "is the instrument with which the deed is to be done."

Abd-el-Aziz now put into the hand of Khaled

a large ivory-handed Khorassan dagger, which as he drew it out of the scabbard showed itself to be beautifully waved; but it was with difficulty that Khaled, although trained from infancy to suppress all ebullition of feeling, could resist a thrill of horror on hearing such a proposition, and on seeing the instrument with which it was to be effected. Brave in battle, he revolted at assassination, even of his bitterest foe, and his repugnance was tenfold increased when he reflected, that the intended victim was a man who had given him a substantial proof of good-will, and was by the general voice proclaimed to be a man of a fine moral nature. His first emotion was indignantly to declare himself recalcitrant; but he reflected that this would involve the sacrifice of his own life to a spirit of hellish fanaticism, and that it would still be open to these dark and gloomy bigots to accomplish the destruction of Cassim by other means. His blood seemed to curdle within him as he mechanically felt the sharp point and followed the wavy temper of the poniard, and, with a cold perspiration on his brow, he remarked aloud

its ornamental knob of silver, gold and zinc enamel.

"Ay," continued Abd-el-Aziz, "that is a blade worth looking at, and Salih will tell you that that weapon has drawn infidel blood before now, both on the slopes of Salahieh and on the slope of Kalat-el-Hossn. But come up to the roof of the house while daylight enables us to examine the locality."

Khaled and Salih now followed Abd-el-Aziz to the roof of the house, which was perfectly flat, and covered with a composition of gypsum and sand, so as to exclude the little rain that falls in that climate;—a cement of a quality so inferior to that of Syria, that if a really heavy rain were to last three days, nearly all Cairo would be unroofed.

Khaled was as yet somewhat imperfectly acquainted with the curious labyrinth of Cairo streets, which at first is almost as troublesome to a stranger as the unfrequented parts of Venice. It had not struck him therefore that this was in such immediate approximation to Cassim's house, the access was so very round about, and,

on taking the house, he had seen only the view from the lower roof, which looked northwards towards the walls and the desert. It was to the higher part of the roof, forming a sort of square turret, that Khaled now followed Abd-el-Aziz up a wooden side-stair from the lower roof, and here, protected by a parapet, was a wide prospect, including the hills of Mokattam, the great dome and lofty walls of Sultan Hassan, above which rose the battlements of the castle. The sun, being in Khaled's face, abstracted for a moment his eyes from the surrounding houses, but looking over the parapet to the south, he at once perceived where he was, on Abd-el-Aziz telling him that the building at the other end of a small garden, marching with the back court of the house in which he was, formed the northern side of the court-yard in which he had enjoyed, sometime before, the circumcision festivities of Cassim.

"Keep back," said Abd-el-Aziz, "so as to avoid observation, and look through the hole in the parapet, so that we may see without being seen. Observe, we must risk going over the

roof of our neighbour's house in the night, so as to get on the wall that leads across to Cassim's roof. We have procured a ladder to let down on the second roof, which communicates with the room where his money is concealed; — but there comes the neighbour on his roof! Let us descend! Rouse your wits during our absence. Make yourself familiar with every corner of house and garden; and to-morrow we will discuss the matter finally."

When Abd-el-Aziz had concluded his provisional instructions, he quitted the house along with Salih, and Khaled felt as if a load had been taken off his breast. He now resolved to break at once and for ever with his connections, and, regardless of the injunctions or maledictions of kindred, to warn Cassim forthwith, without denouncing his accomplices. And next morning, on rising from the single mattress, which formed, along with the old lumber-stool, the only furniture in the room, he proceeded to a scribe's shop in the bazaar, and wrote two letters, one of which was to Abd-el-Aziz, telling him that he had renounced this business,

but that he had no intention of betraying their secret or of denouncing them to justice; and, in order to avert any evil consequences to themselves, they had simply to desist from all further prosecution of their designs. He related to them how Cassim had relieved him from prison, and confessed himself incapable of carrying out a scheme of such vengeance, and that he reproached himself for not having had the courage to declare at once his final separation from their faith, be the consequences to him what they might; that he was warning Cassim not to send his son to the garden, which rendered it unnecessary for him to have any further communication with the gipsies of Hosh Bardak, which was a den of thieves, that he hoped never to enter again as long as he lived.

With regard to Sheikh Cassim, Khaled having by daybreak given up the key of the house to the proprietor, with the intelligence that he did not intend to occupy or to reclaim the month's rent paid in advance, he judged that no immediate attempt would be made to break into Sheikh Cassim's house; he there-

fore simply warned Cassim against allowing his son to go out of sight, and told him to be prepared against any attacks on his person or property, and signed his letter, "One who esteems you." Both letters were sent by street porters, but that to Abd-el-Aziz was delivered after he had gone out.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LONG GARDEN.

When the porter delivered Khaled's letter at the door of Sheikh Cassim, the Nubian door-keeper told him that he was not within, and on this Sheikh Hamood took the letter and put it into his pocket, telling the porter that Cassim should have it on his return; but as the hour arrived for Halil going to the Long Garden, Sheikh Hamood accompanied him, the letter having been forgotten.

The fierce glow of the Egyptian summer, which seemed to burn all up, and to make the strongest vegetation droop, which banished every green blade from the ground, and, instead of grass, herbage, or weeds, left a fine parched and pulverized earth, and

seemed to dissolve all Cairo and its environs into one monotonous tone, was now succeeded by the beautiful days in the latter end of November, when the heat of summer is past, and all the lakes around Cairo still contained Nile water, which had oozed subterraneously; and the season, although the fall of the year, was not the fall of the leaf, for the inundation brought round a second spring to the husbandman, and Nature was just rising refreshed and beautiful from her autumnal bath.

Enchanting as the environs of Damascus are, there are some points in which the suburbs of Cairo afford a more peculiar interest. Yonder, in Syria, no sooner are we beyond the town, than adieu to all ornaments, to all architecture, to taste, or to the monuments of luxury. Not so in the environs of Cairo; here, suburban Nature does not dispense with art, and in the villas beyond the Bab-el-Adouy, the fountain, the garden gate, the villa entrance, the oratory, or the tomb, mingle in one picture,—the chiselled arabesque in the high light of foreground, and the deep green

of the orange, the lemon, and the sycamore, in deep shadowy relief.

Onwards trudged Halil on his little black donkey, with silver-mounted bridle, accompanied by Sheikh Hamood on a mule, a groom, and a Nubian servant, until they came to a suburb, called the Hosseyneey, inhabited by the butchers of Cairo, a set of men strong and healthy in body, and comparatively honest and generous in disposition, but coarse in language, and violent and turbulent in demeanour. In the midst of the suburb is a mosque and convent of dervishes, not of Saracenic but of Turkish architecture, of the middle of the eighteenth century, bearing the date 1171 of the Hegira, belonging to the sect Bayoumy, who wear their hair long; and close to this mosque is a large café, where the butchers assemble; and here they alighted to drink a cup of coffee, sitting down on the benches of palm crate ranged along the wall, an awning of mats being overhead. A very fat man, advanced in years, sat at the end of the bench, but leant only on one hip, in consequence of a singular accident, that had

happened to him some years previously. The *mohtissab*, or inspector of weights and measures, having been a man of excessively cruel disposition, and Abou-Ali-el-Djezzar, the butcher in question, having a very insolent tongue in his head, was one day caught with short weights, and vomiting a torrent of foul-mouthed abuse on the *mohtissab*. This person caused him to be stripped, and a small rumpsteak cut off his hip; but some of the tendons having been interfered with in this rough method of justice, he walked lame from that time to the period we speak of, and always sat sideways, and was now retired from business, and cross and testy in manner. Beside him sat a new acquaintance of Sheikh Hamood, a plausible, talkative man, who had scraped acquaintance with him a few days before, and who was no other than Hassan the gipsy, — no longer a dervish, but in good holiday clothes of a layman, accompanied by an accomplice, one Hussein Hodour.

"Singular chance," said the gipsy to Sheikh Hamood, "that I on my way to the Long Garden should meet my trusty and jovial friends, and

at the right moment too! Look here, my lads," continued he, holding up a basket, "what are the good things of this world without a little fellowship? Here are two cold fowls stuffed with rice, and here are pistachio nuts from Aleppo, and apricot kamareddin from Damascus, and white cheese from the Sheikh of the Caraites, fit to be eaten by a king. So let us gladden our hearts with a day of enjoyment; for what can be fairer than the Long Garden, with the song of its birds, or the canoon, played with the fingers of the fair, or the *Nay*, piped by those who are cunning in sweet sounds? I was on my way thither with my friend here, and you are truly welcome to join us."

"By Allah, my brother," said Sheikh Hamood, "I am touched with thy heart, which dilates mine better than garden or psaltery."

"Whose son is that?" said the butcher, changing the position of his hip.

"The son of Sheikh Cassim Shah-Bandar-at-Tudgar."

"It is long since I knew him," said the

butcher. "Is the young man Abdallah still clerk with him?"

"Young man indeed!" said Sheikh Hamood, "with a grey beard."

"I forgot," said the butcher, "that I was then myself twenty years younger, and a more active man than I am now with this mass of fat; and Cassim's partner, Sheikh Rifaa, who used to live in the Atifet Shomar, and rode a sleek Dongola horse, and used to pray in the Hosseyneyn. What is he about?"

"I do not know," said Sheikh Hamood.

"He is gone to the mercy of the high God," said the Nubian, "and buried on the eve of the festival Shim-el-Neseem, seven years ago."

"Ah! there are few better men in Cairo than your master," said the butcher.

"You are right," said the Nubian; "I have served him fourteen years and more, and if he were my father I could not love him more when I hear his voice in command or forbiddance. Mohammed, do this—Mohammed, do that—Mohammed, go thither—Mohammed, come hither—Mohammed, make—Mohammed,

mend—by Allah! I jump with alacrity, as if if I were his right hand depending on his shoulder."

"And of course," said the butcher, with a coarse chuckle, "he does not forget to make you a present at the festival of the Bairam?"

"He does not," said the Nubian, "nor yet at the festival of the Prophet."

They then wished the butcher good day, and proceeded to the Long Garden, by the road of the Lion and Panther, so called from the rude effigies of this sort, standing at the gate of a field, like the arms at the entrance to a park in England. They were put up in the time of Sultan Bibars, who so distinguished himself in the Crusades,—and took so prominent a part in the defeat of St. Louis at Damietta. So that after Saladin, he is the principal figure in the Crusades on the Moslem side. He used lions as his arms as Macrisi distinctly states, and similar effigies are to be seen at the so-called Bridge of the Lion at the other end of Cairo.

At the corner of a street near here, they saw

a tomb, and Sheikh Hamood said to a man with an open mouth and a vacant stare,

"Do you know to whom this tomb belongs?"

"Oh! yes," said he, with great readiness.

"To whom?" said Sheikh Hamood.

"Why," said the man, turning the matter over in his mind, "to the man buried in it."

"And who is buried in it?" said Hamood.

"Ah! that 's more than I can tell," said the idiot, who passed on with his mouth more open, and his stare more vacant than before.

They then came up to a Frank who had been examining the effigies of the lion and the panther—one Signor Muranesi, with his interpreter, whom Sheikh Hamood asked as to the object of his employer in that unfrequented part of Cairo, and being informed that he was an archæologist, Sheikh Hamood remarked that they had just spoken with a man who had not the least turn for that class of study,—"as ignorant as a buffalo," added he, "on these matters."

"Have you visited the pyramids?" said Sheikh Hamood to the Archæologist through the interpreter.

"Yes, I have," said the Archæologist.

"And whether," said Sheikh Hamood, "are these lions or the pyramids older?"

"I think," said the Archæologist, "that the pyramids are several thousand years older than these lions."

"You are right," said Sheikh Hamood; "the pyramids were constructed about the time of Adam. Are you able to read the hieroglyphics on the temples?"

"I know a few of the signs."

"Then how long is it," said Hamood, "since the Crusaders landed in Egypt?"

"Between five and six hundred years."

"Mashallah!" said Hamood, "what an advantage it is to know hieroglyphics as you do so precisely—six hundred years;—we have just parted with a man who was as ignorant of history as a buffalo."

Leaving the Frank, they now entered a narrow dusty lane between the walls, where they

wished the sun a little less powerful, though in November; but presently piercing a gate, where they experienced a sudden sensation of coolness from a water-wheel, they found themselves in the Long Garden. Here large orange and citron trees growing in luxuriant disorder to the height of thirty or forty feet, an unusual stature for them, give the Caireens the thick shade which they desire in hot weather, without any attempt at order or trimness: the dark vistas occasionally broken with a flake of golden sunshine.

The garden was full of company; on one side were the members of the Incorporation of Tanners, who were that day taking their annual dinner, an ample repast, laid out along the ground, to which that respectable body, headed by their sheikh, did ample justice, squatted in two long rows opposite each other, making themselves merry with water, and the prospect of coffee and tobacco,—the caterer of the dinner having no other stock in trade than the requisite quantity of vessels and dishes for the public garden dinners. At the other side of

the garden were various hareems in little picnic parties, chatting and singing among themselves, and lolling on the little carpets they had brought with them.

A mat was demanded of the garden-keeper, and placed by Hussein Hodour in a nook of the wall, very near the gate, on which they seated themselves, and the contents of the basket being laid out, they began to eat. Hassan, the ex-dervish, making a business of entertaining Hamood, and Hussein, his accomplice, taking an especial delight in amusing Halil with carolling round among the trees when they had done their repast; the remains of which were eaten up by the servants at a short distance.

"This is the hour of diversion and good-humour," said Hassan to Hamood; "the infidels have their wine, which is forbidden except as a medicine; but there is a jar of Persian sherbet, that will sweeten your mouth and clear your brain," so first of all pretending to take a draught of it himself, he handed to Sheik Hamood a small jar of a red intoxicating wine—who took a long pull at it.

"By Allah!" said Hamood, in a whisper, "if this be a day of pleasure it is a day of sin; for, if I mistake not, that is wine."

"Hush, my friend," said Hassan; "name not that word, for this is an open garden. Citrons and sycamores have no eyes, but men have ears. When the hour of delight steeps my soul in oblivion I need a moderator like yourself to tell me when and where to stop," and he again placed the jar of wine in Hamood's hand.

"We have yet time," said Sheikh Hamood, with a shame-faced smile. "We have eaten and are filled; the sun is still well above the meridian. I delight not in wine, but as it makes me relish your sweet discourse," and he again took a long draught from the jar.

"Wine is forbidden," said the gipsy, putting the jar again to his lips, and making a semblance of drinking, "so take one draught more, and then we will dash the wine-jar in pieces on the ground, so as to avoid intoxication," and again placed the jar in the hands of Hamood, who took it with a languid smile.

"Verily," said Hamood, "my refuge is in repentance, and not in resistance. Verily, the Lord loveth him that repenteth;" and, raising the wine to his lips, took another long draught of it, and repeated the lines—

"Is the juice of the grape intoxication and a deadly sin?
Nay, verily, the hand of man maketh it a deadly poison.
Can the cup of its own accord reach the lips of the creature?
Nay, verily, the hand of man lifteth the deadly poison;
And the hand made for righteous works is the instrument of the tempter."

"This is the happiest day of my life," said the gipsy, "for I am united with you in the bonds of fellowship and good humour. After all," said the gipsy in a whisper, "the lawful is bitter, but the forbidden is sweet as honey; so hand me the jar again before I break it."

"Sweet is the forbidden, do you say?" said Hamood, with a demure look, interrupted by a hiccup. "You forget," added he, attempting to look stern, while his eyes showed a con-

strained rollicking humour, "sycamores and citrons have no eyes, but men have ears."

"So they have," said Hassan, "and mine are for poetry, but of a merrier sort than the last you quoted."

"Merrier," said Hamood, with a wink of his eye and another hiccup. "Well, then, what say you to this?—

"The life of the poor is a weary walk with a heavy burden.
Even the great king is a stranger to the sweetness of delirious desire,
Or the enjoyment of trickling fountains in dome-crowned pavilions;
For he never tasted the bitter draught of poverty.
But thou, rosy liquor, art made to be the solace of my soul!
To delight the sated king and to drown the cares of the poor!"

"Good," said Hassan; "I think it was neither Lokman nor yet Solomon the wise, that wrote these lines."

"No," whispered Hamood, with swimming eyes; "it was a pupil of him that taught 'Sweet is the forbidden —.' But, how strange! the world seems to be all whirling round, so I

will e'en sit still, and wait until Mergoosh Street passes by, and then step into our own house."

No sooner did Hussein-el-Hodour see the groom go with the Nubian to eat up the remainder of the repast than he pointed to beyond the wall of the Long Garden, and asked Halil if he had ever heard of the Cadi of Cairo causing all the cats to be fed at the hour of afternoon prayer, and Halil remembered the intense delight with which he had one day seen that banquet. "That," said the gipsy, "beyond there, is the Garden of the Cat; shall we go and see it?"

"I should like to see the Garden of the Cat," said Halil; "let us go and see it." And the gipsy, seeing the exit from the Long Garden unobstructed by the attention of the groom and the Nubian, took the boy into the lane unnoticed; and once there, the curiosity of the boy was sufficiently active to make him walk smartly with the gipsy in the direction of the garden. Instead, however, of taking him thither, he went on with him to near the Bridge of the Goose, and then turning suddenly into a lane to

the eastward, pointed him out a garden, which was not that of the Cats. At which Halil expressed much disappointment, as he expected to see a number of cats there, and wished to return.

"The road we came by, my dear," said the gipsy, "is too round about; we will return by another road," and took him farther up the lane, so that they were on the desert, with the tombs of the Mameluke Sultans in the distance.

Halil, having now walked a good pace, was weary, and asked where Sheikh Hamood was. "Close by, my lad," said Hussein; "but you are tired, so there is a donkey you can mount, in order that we may arrive quickly."

A miserable donkey stood, held by a dark gipsy lad, who had been sitting by a small dome tomb. He stood up, and exchanging a wink with Hussein, the latter mounted, with Halil in front of him, and both set out at a trot along the sands, Halil not understanding anything of the matter, and giving evident signs of impatience, and asking when they would arrive and see Sheikh Hamood. Instead, however,

of returning in that direction, he was describing a wide semicircle; and at last, when the sun was sinking, and Halil, in alarm, began to cry with impatience, the gipsy quarrelled with the lad for taking the wrong road, and, it being too late to return to the garden, he bade him go direct to the house of Sheikh Cassim in the Mergoosh.

This tranquillized the boy for a while, but the gipsy ass-driver had had his cue, and, keeping along the hollow, between Mount Mokattam and Cairo, at the foot of the mounds of rubbish, they entered the Bab Mahrook at sunset, and, after passing through a great many streets that Halil did not know, all leading to the Mergoosh, as Halil thought, — it was quite dark when the donkey entered Hosh Bardak, — the gipsy said he would wait there only a moment, and the donkey being driven into the apartment occupied by the Nowar, and the large wooden door being locked, Halil was lifted off the donkey before he knew what he was about, and pushed down the trap stairs. There he raised a loud and piercing cry of

alarm, but the old gipsy, who was waiting with the lantern, put his hand on his mouth, and the trap being immediately closed over them by the old gipsy above, no noise was heard to alarm the other inhabitants of Hosh Bardak.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ADIEUS OF WURDY.

The servants were the first to notice the absence of the boy. Sheikh Hamood having fallen asleep, and both of his friends having disappeared, this discovery, along with the recollection that he had brought with him a letter to Sheikh Cassim, instead of delivering it to him, at once sobered him; and not daring to mention the word wine, said, that a stupifying drug had been administered to him, by the aid of which the boy had been taken off. Searches and inquiries were made in all directions, and it was not until past sunset that the groom was despatched with the intelligence to the Mergoosh.

It were vain to depict the despair which this

event produced in the family of Sheikh Cassim, and instead of dwelling on the details of his mental state, and of that of his wife, it is sufficient to say, that on the third night Sitt Wurdy reclined on a divan, bolstered up with pillows, and looked so pale and exhausted that it was evident, even by the flickering of two lamps, that Death held his dart poised and ready to strike another victim. Cassim sat beside her, bathed in tears; the two black attendants glided from side to side, wringing their hands, rather than rendering needful assistance, while a female physician, holding a cup with an air of *nonchalance*, kept repeating, mechanically,

"Cheer up, fruit of my liver! all will yet be well. This is a passing illness. — The boy will yet be found. — Do not lose heart, but be of good cheer.—This is a sore anxiety for you, Sheikh Cassim; but, Inshallah! if I have any skill in the noble art of medicine, and any confidence in the potency of the slips of the Koran selected by Sheikh Soyouty, according to the most undeniable astrological

data, your wife will recover. — Come, apple of my eye, take one more draught of violets, and let soul and body be comforted ! "

" I have seen my last sun," said the invalid, feebly; " to-morrow will rise on the cold remains of Wurdy."

" Oh, Wurdy ! Wurdy ! " said Cassim, as if imploring his wife to do something that lay in her power; " while there is life, there is hope. Oh ! my beloved, remain to comfort us."

" It was as yesterday, Cassim," said the invalid, " when after marriage I entered this apartment; but alas ! the bridal chamber too soon became the abode of despair. Give me the draught again," said Wurdy, and the female physician presented it; but Cassim took the cup and gave it to his wife, who called the black girl and said, — " Oh ! Zeynab, the world is vain and empty. Oh ! Zeynab, learn truth, and keep your heart white; bekind to old Zahrah, for she is weak and feeble, and oh ! Cassim, let Zeynab always remain here."

Zeynab's tears ran down her black cheeks, while she knelt down and put the yellow and

lifeless hand of Wurdy to her dusky lips; and Cassim said, "She shall never be put away by me; and I will read to her the passages of the Koran that you liked."

"And the institutes of Abd-el-Ghany-el-Nabolsi," said Wurdy, "which you used to read to your son. Oh! Halil! Halil! where art thou, my beloved? too soon, alas! too soon were you torn from the arms of a sorrowing mother. Oh! I had died in peace, if blessed with one look or one accent of thy voice. Oh! Duniah! one look—one look or one word—only one word"— and all around her sobbed—a tear glistened in the eye of even the old female physician; but Wurdy's own well of tears had been dried up. "Zeynab," added she, "bring me the clothes he wore;" on which the attendant went and brought the scarlet embroidered suit he wore on the circumcision occasion. And Wurdy again asked, "Where is the wearer? Oh! Halil! Halil!"

Cassim groaned, and repeated verses of the Koran. The female physician now dropt her mechanical exhortation to comfort, and this

effort having exhausted Wurdy, she asked for a pipe, attempting to smoke a whiff and put it away, saying that she saw her son burning in the tobacco. She then fell into a sort of slumber, and suddenly awaking, said,—"Who is that?"

"Your Cassim, who loves you," said her husband, and then she muttered as if forgetting her own grief and addressing a third party,

"Oh! poor Cassim! he has no son to kiss his hand in the morning—a childless old age! —oh! poor Cassim."

Cassim, with a sort of terror that he had never felt before during her physical sufferings, viewed the gradual disappearance of her reason as if some part of his accustomed self had taken a strange departure, and left a blank that the mind could not realize.

"Wurdy, Wurdy! do you know me? who am I? who am I?" said he, in a transport of grief.

"You are the Jewish physician," said Wurdy, as if seeking to arouse herself from a slumber.

"She is no longer of this world," said Cassim, raising his hands with a groan.

Loud breathing now began, and when it had ended with the climax of the death rattle and perfect stillness, Cassim closed her eyes, and said aloud,

"She is gone to the mercy of the High God. And the Prophet hath said in the Surat of Mariam, 'that those that enter paradise shall not be wronged, and that his promises shall be fulfilled to the godly.'"

Meanwhile, active search was made for the boy by the agents of the Waly of Cairo. Cassim and his wife had, at the first, thought of the gipsy girl, and she was apprehended, as well as her father and stepmother, and for three days subjected to severe interrogatories; but their answers, although separately questioned, so concurred in exculpating them, that, although they were still retained in durance vile, the real culprits were left unscathed, as the old gipsy, who had lately lost his hand, had again become dangerously ill, and it was not supposed that a person in that state would

undertake or assist in the abduction of a son of one of the principal men of the town. And as for Sheikh Hamood, he stoutly maintained that some stupifying drug or poison had been administered to him; and, ignorant of the contents of the letter, which he had supposed to be on some ordinary business, he altogether forgot to deliver it even on his return, and this gross and culpable negligence was for a time undiscovered.

Khaled had fully calculated that Cassim, receiving a timely warning, would not allow his son to go to the garden; and that the plans of Abd-el-Aziz would be equally disconcerted; and his mind being set at rest, he now thought of his own safety, so as to be beyond the reach of the vengeance of the now exasperated patriarch, and of rejoining Melusina in Aleppo; for a return to Taraf-el-Gharb was not possible, as he had fairly broken with his own people; but before starting for Aleppo, he thought it best to go into the Mousky, or Frank quarter, in consequence of an incident that had occurred a few days before.

He was standing in the crowded bazaar of Hordageey, looking at a shop arrayed in snuff-boxes, coffee-cup holders, and other articles of hardware, when a voice that he had heard before struck upon his ear; and turning his head, he perceived that Signor Moro, the uncle of Melusina, had passed him, conversing with another Frank. Association forthwith conjured her image to his view, as he last saw her in the castle by moonlight, with all the accessorial circumstances of the owl that disturbed their conversation, and the parental malediction that followed the evil omen. Hence he thought it better before starting for Aleppo, to proceed to the Frank quarter, and attempt to find out, through third parties, whether Melusina was at Aleppo or still at Taraf-el-Gharb, he therefore removed to a room in a khan, not very far from the Mousky, which is the name for the Frank quarter in Cairo. But before we relate the further adventures of Khaled, it may be as well now to say something of what befel Melusina after the departure of Khaled from Taraf-el-Gharb.

CHAPTER XIX.

MOUNT CASSIUS AGAIN.

On the morning following the interview of Khaled with Melusina in the castle, Moro, at sunrise, was sitting wrapped up in his dressing-gown, with disturbed and anxious brow, and beside him stood the Armenian, in his old red Tunis nightcap, with stunted blue tassel, smoking his early pipe.

"Who could ever have suspected such a thing? The bare thought of it fills me with gall and bitterness," said Moro.

"But," said the Armenian, "you say, that before you let her go to bed she confessed that he had promised to become a Christian, and to remove himself from hence. Is not this

noble on his part? Is not every addition to the Christian faith an advantage?"

"Oh, ho! you begin to take her part, do you?" said Moro. "Christian, indeed! The devil take such Christianity! Death terrifies the greatest sinner, and a honeymoon would coax the greatest saint. When a youth is twenty years of age, it is not easy to resist an apostle with a pair of bright black eyes, and manners as soft as satin. The question is not to be entertained for a moment. I will never hear of it."

"Hist!" said the Armenian, in a low tone, looking round. "What can that be? She speaks in her sleep."

Moro and the Armenian listened again, and became conscious of Melusina's speaking, the room in which she slept being closed, not by a door, but by a curtain, as in Oriental houses. Moro rose, and passing through a small anteroom, gently lifted up the curtain, and entered; the Armenian not trusting himself, but remaining at the door to hold the curtain.

The room had plain stone and unplastered

walls, but a feminine neatness and taste might be seen in even the temporary disposition of the apartment, out of the scanty means furnished by the baggage that had made the journey from Aleppo on mule-back. She lay on the mats, carpets, and bedding spread on the ground, beautiful in sleep. A small, red, night fez, that covered her head, was bound round with a light blue and white silk scarf handkerchief, of the Tripoli fashion, while her glossy hair, bound in plaits, fell down on an alabaster neck: a slight perspiration stood on her brow. She spoke at intervals. The repose of her classical features was disturbed by an agitating dream, and she kept muttering in a low but distinct tone.

"Oh, Khaled, Khaled! Oh, my beloved! I alone it is — I alone, who have brought you into this terrible strait. Oh, Khaled, pardon me! Can you pardon me? — pardon your Melusina? O! good people, save him! spare him! Take my life instead of his! Oh, spare him! spare him!"

"You hear," whispered Moro: "something

he may have said last night is uppermost in her mind. Sh ! sh ! She mutters again ! "

" Oh, Khaled, Khaled ! but one hour to live ! Oh, terrible ! Take the knife away ! My eyeballs ache ! Oh ! spare him ! Plunge it in my heart, instead of his ! Oh ! Khaled ! what is life when you are no more ! "

" Poor lovely girl ! " whispered the Armenian ; " woe 's my heart ! woe 's my heart ! Sure, it were better to wake her, and end the nightmare ! "

" It is all a nightmare," said Moro. " The nightmare of the moment is nothing. We must dispel the nightmare of a lifetime, and preserve our house from the barest possibility of such an union."

" See," said the Armenian ; " see what a countenance ! She is in a frenzy ! The fit begins again ! "

" Curse on you, fiends of hell ! " continued Melusina, clenching the tapering fingers of a small white hand. " Oh, kill me too ! and bury us in one tomb ! You fiends in human shape ! Oh ! Khaled ! dead ! Oh, God !

Not a word to your Melusina! Give me his heart to keep in my blue vase, with fragrant flowers. Ah, me! All my days to do nothing but weep — and weep!"

"The crisis is violent," said Moro, dropping the curtain; "send in your wife to awake her, and then come to me in the garden. I have formed a resolution, and you must assist me in it, for my brain is getting confused, and I am so full of spleen, that I could take a delight in seizing all that crockery on the shelves and dashing it in pieces!"

So saying, Moro went into the garden, and was soon joined by the Armenian, who informed him that his wife had awakened his niece, but that she complained of violent headache.

"I have resolved to start from hence this very day," said Moro, sitting down under a retired walnut-tree.

"What! back to Aleppo?" said the Armenian.

"No, forward to Cairo," said Moro. "If I took her back to her uncle in Aleppo, the sudden return would cause whisperings and

annoy her; besides, from thence she might easily return hither, for she would still be within hail of this cursed magic mountain; but the difficulty arises from this disease in her mind, which is evidently in the most violent crisis; and as she has a will of her own, I fear that if I propose to take her to Egypt with me (whither I intended to go, after her uncle came to take her back to Aleppo), that I might meet some opposition, and risk an elopement with this barbarian. So I have resolved—but, remember, not a word to a living soul — to give her a sleeping draught, so as to make her unconscious; and, as we are near the sea ———"

"A crime!" said the Armenian, with a look of horror.

"No crime at all," said Moro. "A pleasant voyage to Rosetta, and a trip on the Nile to Cairo, which is a gay, pleasant place, is the only project I meditate; and, as change of scene is the best cure for love, she would soon forget this low cut-throat."

"Good," said the Armenian; "but the sleep-

ing draught is not to my mind; and upon my word, willing as I am to serve you, the fact is, with all due respect, I have a most invincible repugnance to her leaving my home in such a state. Could she not, for instance, be enticed on board under some pretext?"

"Then we should have a terrible scene. I will consult, if you like, Hannah Surur of Antioch, who is the most skilful physician in the country."

"Ah! that is another affair," said the Armenian, "and sets my mind at rest; he would know exactly what to do on such an occasion, both in the matter of convenience and of medical skill, and nothing could happen in my house contrary to what is right, if he had the management of the business."

"Well," said Moro, "I will ride over to Antioch, and bring Surur with me; and do you go at once to Suediah, and hire a large boat, and make the skipper lie off the beach below Taraf-el-Gharb by midnight, and instruct him to get ready water for a long voyage. Get somebody here to roast a quantity of fowls, and

I will bring from Antioch what dry provisions I can get in the bazaar."

"Good!" said the Armenian; "I will manage as well as I can."

CHAPTER XX.

ANTIOCH.

On the same day at noon, Moro's horse, reeking with perspiration, was reined in as he came in sight of the noble environs of Antioch; the wide Orontes flowing through the plain, the city encompassed with luxuriant gardens skirting it for some distance, while, high above, the world-renowned hills which crown the scene were crested with those wide-spreading historic walls, which, if destitute of the grace of the harmonious colonnade, or the massiveness of the primæval substructure, yet, from their extent, are prominent among the monuments of Syria, and create surprise at the prodigious labour and perseverance displayed in the works of the ancients, even during periods when the vital

sap of empire was exuding, before the final crash of rottenness. Antioch is no longer the queen of the East—the city of either Macedonian soldier princes, or of Roman luxury—of Greek orthodoxy and dialectics, or of Latin feudal valour; shrunk to a tithe of former extent, she is a puny provincial capital, more Turkish than Arab, the Greeks but a remnant, and, instead of the sights and sounds of courts and camps, offered nothing to attract the notice of Moro, as he entered, but the creaking of floating mills, the rattle of a few silk-looms, and the unsightly processes of tanners' craft, with the crimson and yellow skins stretched on boards, while the most prominent figures that filled up the fore-ground of this picture were the disinherited pedestrian Greek timidly standing aside, and saluting the Turkish effendi mounted on his sleek-coated barb.

Moro alighted at the house of Hannah Surah, and passing through the paved court, where his wife was sifting a pile of corn, he entered the divan of the man of science, which contained no furniture except a fœtus in a glass bocal, some

papers of medicine, and a few Arabic books on a shelf, bound in black with flaps and strings. Hannah himself was engaged in prescribing for one Manoel Branca, a Portuguese agent from Scanderoon, who, addicted to strong liquors in that deadly climate, lost his health, and, attracted by the fame of Hannah in fevers of the country, had come hither to consult him. His face was so sallow, and his form so emaciated, that when he went out, Moro asked him what he would give for his life. "Very little," said Hannah, "for he lives in Scanderoon, that lazar-hospital and grave-yard, and he has been assisting nature the wrong way."

Hannah Surur was a Syrian Christian; in person, a strong, powerful, jolly, middle-aged man, with a good-natured countenance and intelligent black eyes. He had a great reputation in the country as a practical man, and, although unlearned in anatomy, could cut off a fever, or set a bone with a promptitude and success that were particularly displeasing to a Florentine graduate of the University of Pisa, settled in the place, who spoke of him with the greatest

contempt. "The fellow has some genius," said he; "but without education he is like an uncoined piece of gold;" which being repeated to Hannah by what Mr. Dangle calls "some d—d good-natured friend," he remarked, "Better the uncoined gold, than the right stamp on the base metal;" for there was no love lost between them, and the hatred of this Florentine was the only gall that never disappeared from his gay jolly temper and familiar manner. Hannah, although without a university breeding, was not only well acquainted with the works of Avicenna, and the translations of Hippocrates and Galen, whom he used to pronounce *Gilenos*, as well as the Arabic translation of the Medical Encyclopedia of the Jesuits, which had shortly before issued from the Roman press; but had intense yearning after all knowledge, however or wherever it could be picked up.

"How are you, Hannah?" said Moro; "it is now some odd years since I knew you in Aleppo."

"Some years, indeed, you may say," said Hannah; "I go there once a year, and have

often asked after you, but 'still in Egypt,' was the invariable answer. Believe me, Signor Moro, our Syrian air is better for mankind than yours of Cairo; the fire of life burns too fast there."

"But the flesh-pots of Egypt, Hannah, the flesh-pots of Egypt, man, which boil all the better with a torrid heat."

"True," said Hannah, "so welcome to you. Ya-Mariam!" continued he, calling in his wife from the court-yard; "Signor Moro will dine with us, and, Inshallah! does not stir from hence until to-morrow's sun be risen."

"Softly," said Moro; "another time. I come on a serious business,"—and after a pause, during which his wife made her exit, he added, "I come on a most serious business; but first of all, I must exact from you a pledge of the most solemn secrecy."

"That is the first condition of our priesthood," said Hannah. "I rather think that our confessional is a more sincere one on the part of both confessor and confessed, than if it were chapel, convent, or oratory. I cannot

tell what heaven may be, but if I wished to give the wicked folks of Antioch a taste of hell, I should tell one patient what I heard from another."

"I ask your pardon," said Moro, "and confide in your prudence. This is a most extraordinary and unusual case."

"Not worse than incest or murder, surely," said Hannah.

"No, not worse, certainly," said Moro, slightly offended, "nor so bad, I hope;" and pipes and coffee having been served, he then related the whole affair of his niece, concluding, "I wish a strong dose to produce temporary insensibility, so as to be able to carry the lady without resistance with me to sea to Egypt."

"It is a delicate matter," said Hannah, thoughtfully; "but first of all, and before proceeding farther, are you sure that you are in no mistake, or under no delusion as to her state of mind."

"Impossible," said Moro, "unless I have been in a dream or trance; when you ride over

to Taraf-el-Gharb with me, you can convince yourself from the lips of the Armenian Avegeghim of what I have told you."

"Well," said Hannah, "you are rendering the girl a most signal service in breaking off this connection. I do not advise a draught, which might have the most inconvenient results. I know of a much better method of producing insensibility by means of an ancient art, known in the countries of Irak, Coufa, and elsewhere, from time immemorial; which, used in this case, would have the results you desire, without any of the inconveniences, risks, and perils of a draught."

"None of your Arab spells and incantations, I hope," said Moro. "How can reasonable men like you dream of such a thing?"

"Neither spells nor incantations. Do you take me to be Ahmed Ebn Telamees in Aleppo, with his scraps of Koran, and books of astrology. I mean a magnetic sleep."

"Explain yourself," said Moro.

"There is no mystery in the matter," said Hannah. "To explain myself. The circle,

which is the quintessent unit of beauty, is the principle of the universe. The fashion of the earth's sphere, and the earth's orbit in the heavens, and the mists that rise, the rains that descend, and the rivers that flow, are earth's circulation ; even storms are rotatory and move on wheels. Now, the principal circulations of the body are, the blood in the veins and a finer and more subtle circulation of magnetic fluid in connection with the nervous system. This magnetic circulation, more or less identified with electricity, which may be called the right hand of Omnipotence, is the principle of life, intelligence and sensation, and, by the road of the muscles, is the ambassador of the will to the extremities, and is the spirit which is the invisible bridegroom of the flesh — married, for better or for worse, enjoying reciprocally and suffering reciprocally. Now, as winter is the sleep of vegetable nature, passing from exhaustion to insensible reproduction of power, sleep is the winter of animal nature, the period of insensible reproductions of power, that succeed to sensible exhaustion. Ordinary sleep is the

suspension of the magnetic circulation; magnetic sleep, its withdrawal from the members and concentration in the seat of intelligence; and although the body be rendered quite insensible, the spirit is quickened."

"You surely do not mean to tell me," said Moro, "that a person in this state knows what she is about?"

"Yes, but she has not the power to act; and a person in this state can even penetrate the unknown."

"Nonsense," said Moro.

"The mind," said Hannah, "cannot enfranchise space; it cannot divine without data. But this faculty of divination is marvellous. It may be called the highest form of suspicion; and the suspicion of every-day life, or the attempt to divine the whole truth out of vague and slender data, is the very same operation of the intellect, exercised under the disadvantage of a defective supply of that magnetic fluid, which aliments life and intelligence, in consequence of its diffusion through the body in order to carry on the other operations of organic existence."

"Can the future be foretold?" said Moro.

"Certainly not," said Hannah; "for the most skilful of those whom I have seen playing billiards at the house of the French consul in Aleppo, can scarcely foretel the *carambolage* of billiard-balls in *poule*. How can the future be foretold, when men are billiard-balls by the million? to whom the slightest impulses from without, give infinite multiplications of abnormal direction. Why, even if the devil had for data the inmost desires of ten men's hearts, the human intellect cannot conceive a faculty capable of calculating the future. This is so plain, that the income such fellows as Ahmed-el-Telamees makes gives me a contempt for human nature."

"Well, Hannah," said Moro, "you are a strange man, and no doubt have an immense reputation in the country, notwithstanding what the priests in the convent say about your secret dealings with the devil in the laboratory behind your house, and the suspicions that exist of your keeping fast-days with great slackness. But tell me, has all your knowledge made you a happier man?"

"It has, and it has not," said Hannah: "after a man has fairly asked, and answered himself the question, What was he sent forth to perform in this world? and made his election accordingly—activity in a congenial sphere is, no doubt, the chief source of happiness; but I often lament, like a bird that sees a glimpse of daylight from a cage at the bottom of a dry well. Oh, if I had only learned a single Frank language, or been bred at Padua or Bologna! I should have braced my pennons on the quarries of science like a young falcon! The man that trudges a-foot does not more envy the man that rides a noble Nedjd barb, than I do a man that has had the key of the magazines of European knowledge," continued he, in a glow of enthusiasm, very unusual with so lymphatic a temperament; "and the hope of adding a single grain to those stores — the very smallest discovery in the empire of the mind over matter — of surprising one of the secrets of Nature's smithies and laboratories, would have made me toil night and day by sunlight and lamplight; but I am often sickened when I think that in

some sciences the veriest tyro of a European university is a better man than myself."

"Strange!" said Moro: "and why did you not go to Italy?"

"And my wife and children?" said Hannah; "and my mother and sister? whom I have all had to support since twenty-two years of age; for my father died of plague at Tripoli in the time of Khosref Agha—"

"Dinner is ready," said his wife, entering.

"*Yetfaddal*," said Hannah, rising and showing Moro into the other apartment, whither it is not necessary that we should follow them, as the events of that night were never revealed by either Moro or Hannah.

The sun set as they entered the rugged defiles of Cassius, on their return to Taraf-el-Gharb; and rose next morning behind Lebanon in unclouded splendour as the long Arab boat, hired by the Armenian, scudded away to the southward. The Arab skipper, whose coarse features, embrowned by fifty summers, were surmounted by a white cotton turban, remarked as he looked at the green waves, that, marbled with veins

of white foam, seemed to roll rapidly astern with the breeze that swelled his large patched latine sail, that they were now sixty good miles on their way to Egypt. Moro, pleased with the apparent success of his scheme, enjoyed the sublime spectacle of the ridges of Lebanon, rising to the height of eight or nine thousand feet above the level of the sea,—the bold profiles of sunlit rock springing from the yellow sanded beach, relieved by wide intervals of the villages, woods, and vineyards, somewhat more faintly delineated in the tender violet hues of the morning mountain air. Hannah paid attention to neither land nor sea, his eyes were fixed on Melusina, who lay, with serene countenance, under a little awning, that had been rigged up to keep her from dew or sun,—and then turning to Moro, Hannah whispered him.

"We are now fairly at sea, the sun is high, the scene is exhilarating. I think we may awake her."

"Do so," said Moro.

And Hannah did so; but hebetude with its leaden wings hovered over Melusina. On the

evening of the third day a speck on the horizon was noticed by the man at the bow, who, on seeing the first indication of the Pharos of Alexandria, pronounced aloud the word "Skenderieh."

"There is the land of your birth," said Moro to his niece.

But a flood of tears was the only answer of Melusina.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WONDERS OF THE NILE.

HANNAH—the sight of whom Melusina could not bear—was sent back to Syria, and Moro and his niece proceeded to Rosetta, where they embarked on the Nile. Melusina once more navigated this venerable patriarch of rivers, which was turbid and rapid at this season of the year, but bounteously spreading his swollen waters far and wide, while on the left, the Delta, in her harvest-home attire of green satin, basked in the golden Moghreb. Next morning at sunrise, a slight fog covered the river, as if they had been on the Waal or the Scheldt, but not so thick as to prevent them seeing both banks; for Egypt, with its coasts, "where the broad ocean leans against the land," its large

salt-water lakes, its river entering the sea by several mouths, its canal-life and boat-population, is a sort of Holland of the East, where

"Men do not live but go on board."

On the following afternoon, something on the horizon, like the latine peaks of a hull-down craft, denoted their approach to the Pyramids. This was not Melusina's first sight of them; and yet so strangely solemn are those ancient sentinels of this enchanted land, that they riveted her gaze. She saw how slowly they rose from this nether world, as the boat, impelled by the northern breeze, ascended the Nile. She saw how clearly defined were the outlines of those forms, the broad yellow light on their vast slopes, and the distinctly-bounded shadows averted from the departing day. Moro watched her countenance with anxiety, for the hebetude, that nothing seemed able to dispel, had alarmed him, and he perceived with pleasure that the cloud was beginning to dissipate. Reflecting a little, he came to the conclusion that the pure air of Upper Egypt, and the changeful

scene of a Nile voyage, was more likely to complete the cure of her romantic and imprudent attachment, than a sudden descent upon the monotony of the dull Frank quarter of Cairo; he therefore determined to take in additional provisions and prosecute the voyage.

"Melusina," said Moro, without in the least alluding to the circumstances of their departure from Syria, "you have often heard of the wonders of the Nile, but have not seen them. Although a native of Egypt, you, like myself, who have resided so long in Cairo, know less of this country of marvels than a stranger from the most distant parts of Europe. We are now afloat, and may as well continue our voyage, for the heats of summer are passed. What say you, Melusina? speak; be yourself again, and let me once more think you the woman that has grown out of the lively spirited girl that years ago kept us in such good humour in the Mousky."

"You are my guardian," said Melusina; "I have no opposition to offer to your wishes."

So the Nile voyage was commenced. Pyramid after pyramid sentinelled their water way; and each afternoon, when the heat of the day was passed, they anchored at some pleasant verdant spot, near a grove of palms, and took a short walk on a carpet of turf, which the fresh recession of the inundation had left green. On their return to the vessel, the solemnity of sunset prayer would produce silence from stem to stern, while the unctuous prostrations of the crew proceeded; and as night came on, the chorus of the boatmen produced in Melusina the resonance of other harmonies,—not of the ears, but of the spirit, the memory of joys that were past, "pleasant and mournful to the soul."

The cities of the Thebaid were seen in succession;—Luxor, with its marvels of stone; Esneh, with its pure, dry, healthy air, and the roof of its then unexcavated temple; Edfou, with the awe-striking grandeur of its propylon, which wants the grace of classic architecture, and the curious detail of Saracenic and Gothic, with their subdivisions indispensable to practical

construction, but is the *beau idéal* of useless barbaric majesty. Here ended the open expanse of the Thebaïd, and here the valley soon contracted to the mere channel of the stream. The flat alluvial region was exchanged for arid rocks, overhanging the now swollen and turbid waters of the Nile; and the quarries from which the raw materials of Egyptian architecture were hewn, engaged their attention, and they saw how sharply cut and clearly defined were, in this dry climate, those beds of blocks, removed some three or four millennia ago; and Silsili showed Moro that what, in the palaces of the Venetian canal, was called "the gnawing tooth of time," was merely *humidity*.

Melusina was no archæologist, but Philoe more than anything roused her, for she felt the charm that the frame of pleasing scenery imparted to an architectural picture. This isle of lofty palms, massive propylons, and their connecting colonnades, rising from the bosom of the Nile, which is here enclosed by rocks, some precipitous and some fantastic, produced an unexpected pleasure to the traveller, who,

coming from the Mediterranean, ascended the Nile, with its pinguid flats on either hand. But nothing that Melusina saw made her forget the north of Syria. The masses of Egyptian architecture struck her with astonishment, but there was no background to lend enchantment to the view, no soft-hued hills to relieve the uniformity of art by the fascinating irregularity of natural scenery. Philoe was the exception, which made the rule. In short, the Egypt of the ancients was seen with surprise by an imperfectly educated Frank, but on Northern Syria she dwelt with alternate delight and regret.

As for the mercantile Moro, he thought less of history and antiquity than even Melusina; but at Assouan he did not fail to remark symptoms of nearer approach to the barbarous nations of the interior of Africa. Here were no criers of shawls, carpets and pistols, as at Cairo; nor in these days had articles of antiquity become a matter of trade on the Nile; but here were seen the ostrich eggs, the spears, ebony clubs, and shields of hippopotamus hide;

and here were heard songs of uncouth blacks, in a language having an alphabet of the narrowest compass. At Siout, the point of arrival of the caravans from Darfour, that strange country, where the nice etiquette of the court compels an officer of high rank to wipe the ground every time his majesty the king of that country condescends to spit on the ground—Moro met several mercantile acquaintances, and at various other provincial towns on the Nile paid a visit to the Mameluke beys, with whom he happened to be acquainted, and who lived gorged with luxury, while all around was pinching poverty—a poverty not springing from niggard Nature, but from the defective institutions of man—the rapacity of governors, and the indolence of the governed, in a land where he that sowed was never sure to reap.

Melusina visited several of the principal hareems of the towns where they stopped, and, preparatory to her residence in Cairo, saw the provincial side of Egyptian life; but fits of melancholy, of absence and of despondency frequently recurred. Moro gradually began to

reason with her on the folly of giving way to it, but finding that he himself, from the irascibility of his own temper and the impossibility of stopping himself when he was once agoing, at length gave up the project, and resolved to trust to all-potent Time for a change.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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